

School bullying: A multifaceted phenomenon

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Abstract

School bullying can involve children in different ways, making them play different roles, among them, victims, bullies and bully-victims. The aim of this study was to describe how bullying occurs in high social vulnerability schools of Florianópolis metropolitan area and the roles played by students in this phenomenon. Overall, 409 children and adolescents from the 3rd to 5th grades and of two public elementary schools aged 8-16 years ($X = 11.14$) participated in this study. As a tool, the Olweus Questionnaire adapted to the Brazilian population was used. For data analysis, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were applied by the Mann Whitney and Kruskal Wallis tests. As for results, 29.8% of boys and 40.5% of girls reported being victims; 32.3% of boys and 24.6% of girls reported being bullies. Victims were the most willing to help a colleague who is suffering from bullying ($X = 1.54$; $p > 0.001$), even if they do not know the victims ($X = 1.57$; $p > 0.004$). Bullies are differentiated from the group that does not participate ($X = 1.73$) and the group of victims ($X = 2.34$), being those who felt less alone ($x = 1.47$; $p > 0.001$). It was concluded that the information obtained in this study is indispensable in the search for alternatives to reduce school bullying. The strengthening of relations between school and students and a better preparation of teachers and school staff are extremely necessary to try to minimize the effects of risk factors to which these children are exposed and consequently violence at school.

Keywords

Bullying – Social vulnerability – School.

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Bullying escolar: um fenômeno multifacetado

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Resumo

O bullying escolar pode envolver crianças de diferentes maneiras, fazendo com que essas assumam papéis diferenciados. Dentre estes, têm-se vítimas, agressores e vítimas-agressoras. O objetivo deste estudo foi descrever como ocorre o bullying em escolas de alta vulnerabilidade social da Grande Florianópolis e os papéis assumidos pelos alunos nesse fenômeno. Quanto ao método, participaram 409 crianças e adolescentes do terceiro ao quinto ano e da quarta à sexta série do ensino fundamental, de duas escolas públicas municipais, com idades entre 8 e 16 anos ($X=11,14$). Como instrumento, utilizou-se o Questionário de Olweus adaptado à população brasileira. Para a análise dos dados, empregaram-se a estatística descritiva e estatística inferencial por meio dos testes Mann Whitney e Kruskal Wallis. Quanto aos resultados, 29,8% dos meninos e 40,5% das meninas relataram terem sido vítimas; já 32,3% dos meninos e 24,6% das meninas relataram terem sido agressores. As vítimas foram as que se mostraram mais dispostas a ajudar como podem um colega que esteja sofrendo agressão ($X=1,54$; $p>0,001$), mesmo que não o conheçam ($X=1,57$; $p>0,004$). Em contrapartida, os agressores se diferenciaram do grupo que não participa ($X=1,73$) e do grupo das vítimas ($X=2,34$), sendo aqueles que menos se sentiram sozinhos ($X=1,47$; $p>0,001$). Concluiu-se que as informações obtidas neste estudo são indispensáveis na busca de alternativas para redução do bullying escolar. O fortalecimento das relações entre escola e alunos, e um maior preparo dos professores e funcionários são extremamente necessários para tentar minimizar os efeitos dos fatores de risco a que essas crianças estão expostas e consequentemente a violência na escola.

Palavras-chave

Bullying – Vulnerabilidade social – Escola.

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Introduction

Bullying always aims to injure and hurt the victim, occurring mainly in three ways: direct physical aggression; direct verbal aggression; and indirect aggression (Pereira, 2002; Smith et al., 2008; Craig et al., 2009; Puhl; King, 2013). Direct physical aggression includes open attacks to the victim, involving individual or group actions against a single person through beatings with slaps, pushes, kicks, spits, theft, damage to objects and submission of the other to menial activities. Direct verbal bullying involves taunting actions in public, including name-calling, teasing, threats, nasty nicknames and racist, offensive or humiliating comments. Indirect aggression is through isolation and social exclusion within the social group, hindering the victim's relationships with peers or damaging the victim's social standing through rumors, ignoring the presence of the victim or threatening others so that they would not play with the victim (Bjorkqvist; Österman; Kaukainen, 1992; Pereira, 2002; Mcgrath, 2007; Antunes et al., 2008; Puhl; King, 2013). In addition, some other types of bullying have been reported in literature, such as sexual aggression (Carvalhosa; Lima; Matos, 2001; Runyon et al., 2006; Mcgrath, 2007; Antunes et al., 2008; Santos, 2010; Espelage et al., 2013), extortion, in which bullies demand money or belongings by threats, and cyber bullying, in which victimization occurs in the virtual space (Smith; Ananiadou; Cowie, 2003; Agatston, Kowalski; Limber, 2007; Chibbaro, 2007; Mcgrath, 2007; Wolak; Mitchell; Finkelhor, 2007; Antunes et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2008; Wong et al., 2008; Raimundo; Seixas, 2009; Tsang; Hui; Law, 2011).

The bullying phenomenon is different from other aggressions by the persistence and intentionality, and has three important aspects regarding its characterization: the aggressive act is not the result of a provocation; it is not occasional; and the power inequality between victims and bullies is relevant (Salmivalli,

1996; Pereira, 2002; Raimundo; Seixas, 2009). In addition, Rocha, Costa and Neto (2013) pointed out that, to be considered bullying, aggression should occur among peers and that although the phenomenon is characterized as aggression, not all aggression is classified as bullying. In this context, physical or moral aggression must have four characteristics: author's intention to hurt the target; repetition of aggression; presence of viewing public; and target's agreement regarding the offense.

Bullying occurs in dynamic interaction contexts (Salmivalli, et al., 1996) and can involve children in different ways, making them to play different roles regarding their stance towards this fact. Thus, many roles in the participation in school bullying emerge, among them victims, bullies, bully-victims and spectators. However, each of these roles can also be subdivided into sections, according to the characteristics that typify them (Salmivalli, et al., 1996). In this context, this study was limited to studying only bullies, victims and bully-victims.

Victims usually compose a group of younger students, with few friends, passive, withdrawn, unhappy, socially awkward, insecure, who suffer from shame, fear, depression, anxiety, and are hopeless about the possibility of fitting to a group (Smith; Sharp, 1994; Carvalhosa; Lima; Matos, 2001). They are those who have worse relationships with peers and consume less drugs (Carvalhosa; Lima, Matos, 2001). People with physical and mental disabilities (Cruz; Silva; Alves, 2007), with different sexual and gender orientations (Lyznicki; Mccaffree; Robinowitz, 2004; Rivers, 2004; Méndez, 2007; Méndez; Ceto, 2007; Levasseur; Kelvin; Grosskopf, 2013; Patrick et al., 2013), with congenital or acquired defects, (Louis et al, 2005) and overweight (Strauss; Pollack, 2003) are the main victims of bullying. Individuals who have suffered victimization in childhood in the short term are more likely to present dropout (Stone; Han, 2005), may have difficulty in school activities, get sick

or unwell and have sleeping problems (Sharp; Thompson, 1992). In the long term, they are more likely to suffer from psychological blocks (Lopes Neto, 2005) and mental disorders in adulthood (Piedra; Lago, Massa, 2006), to have greater difficulty in relating to others and show worse self-esteem and - the most worrying of all the bullying consequences - they become more likely to commit suicide (Smith; Madsen, 1996; Henry et al., 2013; Levasseur; Kelvin; Grosskopf, 2013; Pan; Spittal, 2013; Patrick et al., 2013; Puhl; King, 2013).

By contrast, the profile of bullies has some features like: older age, higher physical exercise (Carvalhosa; Lima, Matos, 2001; Peguero, 2008; Raimundo; Seixas, 2009), increased use of drugs, tobacco and alcohol (King et al, 1996; Pereira et al, 2004; Gower; Borowsky, 2013), more violent behavior, better body image (Carvalhosa; Lima; Matos, 2001), more extraversion and self-confidence, absence of feelings of fear, anxiety or guilt (Olweus, 1978; Smith, Sharp, 1994) and tend to have poorer relationships with parents (Junger, 1990). They are often hyperactive, have attention difficulties, reduced intelligence, poor school performance, are primarily responsible for bringing weapons to school, are typically popular and see their aggressiveness as quality, and sometimes take their aggressiveness to adulthood (Pereira et al., 2004; Lopes Neto, 2005; Costa; Pereira, 2010; Reijntjes et al., 2013). This aggressive behavior in childhood brings as consequences problems on emotional and social relationships, difficulties in respecting laws, lower self-control (Pereira, 2002) and increased likelihood of becoming aggressive persons or offenders involved in crime (Olweus, 1978; Freire; Simão; Ferreira, 2006).

Although literature already points these well-defined characteristics for the roles of bullies and victims, in the school environment, the identification of those involved in this type of behavior becomes more complicated, especially for the presence of bully-victim. In such cases, the same child or adolescent can assume both roles in different situations

(Santos, 2010). Approximately 10% of students have a dual involvement, either as bullies or as victims (Raimundo; Seixas, 2009), and this is the group with major risk factors, which have an effect not only additive, but also multiplicative (Spence; Matos, 2000), with increased likelihood of involvement in violent behavior outside of school, use of illicit substances, reports of depression, anxiety, physical and psychological symptoms and with the worst results in psychosocial adjustment assessments (Carvalhosa; Lima; Matos, 2001; Seals; Young, 2003; Carlyle; Steinman, 2007).

However, in any sphere of bullying participation, such power abuse attitudes can lead to serious problems in the development of these children and adolescents (Obrdalj et al., 2013), which will reflect in adulthood. Further investigation on how this phenomenon occurs and what is the profile of school bullying participants, especially in communities at risk (Lewis et al., 2013), in which children and adolescents are in direct contact with violent ways of solving conflicts, become extremely necessary. It is known that the probability of involvement in this kind of behavior grows considerably when the risk factors that affect children and adolescents increase (Spence; Matos, 2000).

The literature has reported some social vulnerability factors that may favor the involvement in school bullying, among them schools with excessive number of students (Codo, 2006), poor school performance and high failure rates (Holt, Finkelhor; Kantor, 2007; Matos et al., 2009), tobacco and alcohol use (Carvalhosa; Lima, Matos, 2001), weak link with the school (Matos et al., 2009), insecure and poorly supervised locations (Lopes Neto; Saavedra, 2003), poor training of teachers and staff with regard to course content and skills in dealing with students and the own work structure (Lopes Neto; Saavedra, 2003; Schreck; Miller; Gibson, 2003), high turnover of teachers (Lopes Neto; Saavedra, 2003), violence outside school (Carvalhosa; Lima,

Matos, 2001), lack of limits and disharmony of households (Santos, 2010); poor affective involvement with parents or absence of one or both parents (Santos, 2010; Senra; Lourenço; Pereira, 2011), low parental education (Analitis et al, 2009;. Perren; Stadelmann; Klitzing, 2009), paternal unemployment and maternal economic inactivity (Magklara et al, 2012.), domestic or interparental violence (Senra; Lourenço; Pereira, 2011), relationships of inequality and low socioeconomic status (Analitis et al, 2009; Senra; Lourenço; Pereira, 2011).

Thus, it is important to emphasize that such violence identified in the school environment is not confined to school walls (Cunha; Weber, 2010), and school bullying considered by Salmivalli and Voeten (2004) is a social phenomenon. Thus, bullying cannot be understood outside the dynamics of society, since this phenomenon is related to political, economic and cultural factors and cannot then be separated from the social, urban, relational and family context in which children and adolescents are inserted (Salmivalli et al., 1998; Silva; Pereira, 2008). The different types of bullying participation are generated according to the social roles, practices and experiences (Salmivalli, 1998; Almeida, Lisboa; Caurcel, 2007; Lopes Neto, 2005), which are directly related to what we can call the individual's identity.

Therefore, the present study aims to describe how bullying occurs in high social vulnerability schools of Florianópolis and the roles played by students in this phenomenon.

Method

This research is part of a project approved by the Ethics Research Committee with Human Beings of the State University of Santa Catarina (UDESC) under process 5439/2011, 75/2011. This is a quantitative and not probabilistic field research with cross-sectional design held in two schools of Florianópolis, SC, chosen for convenience, so that subjects met the high social vulnerability profile proposed in this study.

The study included 409 children and adolescents from the 3rd to 5th grades and from the 4th to 6th grades of elementary school of both sexes aged 8-16 years (mean age of 11.14 years) from two public schools of Florianópolis.

The Olweus Questionnaire adapted to the Brazilian population was used (Oliveira; Barbosa, 2012), which consisted of four blocks of questions: block 1 consists of fifteen questions concerning socio economic data; block 2 has thirteen questions about the situations in which children are victims of some type of aggression coming from peers; block 3 has four questions about the identification of aggressive behavior in school; and finally, block 4 has ten questions about friendship and perception of children in relation to the school recess. In general, the questions were of multiple choice, for example, the question "How many times some student has done something bad to you in the last three months?", in which the answers could be: (1) No time; (2) Once or twice; (3) three or four times; (4) five times or more. Based on information obtained through those who said they were victims or bullies three or more times, a variable classifying students into four categories of bullying participation was created: "no participation" (individuals who were not involved in any victimization or aggression situation); "victim" (individuals who considered themselves victims in three or more situations); "bully" (individuals who considered themselves bullies in three or more situations); and "bully-victim" (individuals who considered themselves victims and bullies in more than three situations).

This study is the result of a larger project in which various instruments were used. Thus, the choice for this educational level was based on age or grades / school years proposed in the instruments. In addition, the presence of the terms grades and school years to determine the educational level is a consequence of the transition process by which Brazilian schools are still undergoing. Thus, both schools still had classes in different curricula.

Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were performed using the chi-square test to verify the association among variables, and one-way ANOVA for comparison of variances between groups, with post hoc Duncan. Survey data were tabulated and analyzed using SPSS software version 20.0 and for all tests, 95% confidence interval was used ($p < 0.05$).

Results

Participants were asked if they had suffered some type of aggression at school. It was found that 29.8% of boys and 40.5% of girls reported being victims of violence at school at least once (Table 1).

Table 1- Being victim of aggression at school

BEING VICTIM OF AGGRESSION	BOYS		GIRLS		χ^2	P
	N	%	N	%		
No time	139	70,2	116	59,5	5,004	0,171
Once or twice	22	11,1	30	15,4		
Three or four times	12	6,1	17	8,7		
Five or more times	25	12,6	32	16,4		
Total	198	100%	195	100%		

N: number of participants; % frequency; p: significance level ≤ 0.05 ; χ^2 : Chi-squared test

When asked how students have suffered some violence, it was found that in both sexes, verbal aggressions were most frequently reported, while reports of indirect

aggression were more frequent among girls. The low prevalence of cyber bullying is worth mentioning, which was expected due to the social conditions of these participants (Table 2).

Table 2- How does bullying occur for victims of both sexes

How bullying has occurred?	BOYS (198)		GIRLS (195)		χ^2	P
	N	%	N	%		
No student have done something bad for me	140	70,7	116	59,5	5,446	0,020
They beat me with punches and / or kicks	34	17,2	29	14,9	0,386	0,534
They put me nicknames and names I did not like	43	21,7	66	33,8	7,211	0,007
They talked about me	27	13,6	53	27,2	11,115	0,001
They stopped talking to me	11	5,6	38	19,5	17,472	0,001
They spread messages through the Internet or phone to harm me	3	1,5	2	1,0	0,187	0,665
They offended me because of my colour / race	10	5,1	17	8,7	2,027	0,155
Outros	28	13,5	17	8,7	-	-

N: number of participants; % frequency; p: significance level ≤ 0.05 ; χ^2 : Chi-squared test

Participants were also asked at which school places or situations these aggressions occurred. For both boys and girls, bullying was more frequent in the classroom, followed

by recreational sites and spaces for physical education. However, girls reported higher occurrence of in the classroom than boys (Table 3).

Table 3- Locations or situations in which school bullying occurs for both sexes

Where or in which situations bullying occurred?	BOYS (198)		GIRLS (195)		χ^2	P
	N	%	N	%		
Corridors and/or stairs	4	2,0	3	1,5	0,130	0,718
School recess	31	15,7	36	18,5	0,547	0,460
Classroom	32	16,2	55	28,2	8,267	0,004
Cafeteria	5	2,5	3	1,5	0,480	0,489
Bathroom	0	0,0	1	0,5	1,018	0,313
Behind school	4	2,0	2	1,0	0,697	0,404
Physical education classes	19	9,2	13	15,4	0,697	0,404
After school	14	6,8	10	5,0	0,280	0,868

N: number of participants; % frequency; p: significance level ≤ 0.05 ; χ^2 : Chi-squared test

Those who have suffered some form of violence reported that, mostly, bullies are classmates, and generally are older than the victims. However, the participation of more than

one student was frequent, and may be more than one class and of different ages and of both sexes. However, the highest prevalence of bullies was of boys, as reported by the victims (Table 4).

Table 4- Class of students who commit aggressions as reported by the victims

To which class students who have aggressed you belong?	BOYS		GIRLS	
	N	%	N	%
No student has done anything bad to me	139	70,2	116	59,5
My class	30	15,2	49	25,1
Other class	17	8,6	9	4,6
My class and other class	12	6,0	21	10,8
Total	198	100%	195	100%
How old are students who have aggressed you?	BOYS		GIRLS	
	N	%	N	%
No student has done anything bad to me	139	70,9	116	59,8
My age	14	7,2	22	11,4
Older than me	22	11,3	25	12,9
Younger than me	11	5,6	9	4,6
My age and older than me	4	2,0	10	5,2
My age and younger than me	1	0,5	2	1,0
Older and younger than me	4	2,0	7	3,6
My age, older than me and younger than me	1	0,5	3	1,5
Total	196	100%	194	100%

N: number of participants; % frequency

About telling someone about the aggression, students reported higher frequency among parents or guardians, followed by the teacher (a) or principal (a). However, it is noteworthy that 10.1% of boys and 6.7% of girls do not tell anyone about this kind of violence. In addition, students also reported on colleagues that have defended these situations. It was found that in this respect,

girls have greater social support than boys, and 13.8% of boys and 8.8% of girls did not have anyone to defend them. However, when asked about what action they took when they saw a colleague of the same age suffering from some kind of aggression, boys (37.0%) were more indifferent than girls (34.4%), reporting that they would do nothing in these situations (Table 5).

Table 5- People searched by victims to tell about the violence suffered at school

Did you tell anybody that someone has done some harm to you in school?	BOYS (198)		GIRLS (202)		χ^2	p
	N	%	N	%		
I did not tell anybody	20	10,1	13	6,7	1,506	0,220
I told one or two friends	6	3,0	7	3,6	0,096	0,757
I told my friends	0	0,0	4	2,1	4,103	0,430
I told to the teacher / principal	18	9,1	13	6,7	0,795	0,373
I told my parents / guardians	22	11,1	49	25,1	13,040	0,001
What do you do when you see someone doing harm to some student?	BOYS (198)		GIRLS (202)		χ^2	p
	N	%	N	%		
Nothing, it is none of my business	41	20,8	38	19,5	0,107	0,744
Nothing, but I think I should help	32	16,2	29	14,9	0,140	0,708
I try to help	71	36,0	74	37,9	0,153	0,696
I help only if it is a friend of mine	51	25,9	48	24,6	0,084	0,772
I help even if I do not know the person	72	36,5	78	40,0	0,494	0,482

N: number of participants; % frequency; p: significance level ≤ 0.05 ; χ^2 : Chi-squared test

About the experience of having committed any aggression against peers, boys reported higher participation, with 32.3% having aggressed at least once, compared to 24.6% of girls (Table 6).

Boys were also those who most reported having disrespected teachers (24.7%) and school staff (3.5%) at least once compared to girls (15.4% and 2.5% respectively). However, it is noteworthy that teachers were more often disrespected compared to staff (Table 7).

Regarding the participation of faculty and staff on issues of violence in school, as perceived by the students, it was found that

for both boys and for girls, teachers intervened more often than employees in bullying situations. However, 42.9% of boys and 51.3% of girls reported that teachers never or almost never do anything to prevent a student to harm another, and 62.1% and 64.1% respectively said the same about employees (Table 8).

A great difference between sexes on having already been alone in school was found, and 36.4% of boys and 61.5% of girls reported having felt alone at least once. Students were also asked about school recess. Approximately 33.0% of boys and girls said they hate, dislike or like little school recesses (Tables 9 and 10).

Table 6- Being bully in school

BEING BULLY	BOYS		GIRLS		χ^2	p
	N	%	N	%		
No time	134	67,7	147	75,4	5,301	0,151
Once or twice	35	17,7	26	13,3		
Three or four times	12	6,1	14	7,2		
Five or more times	17	8,5	8	4,1		
Total	198	100%	195	100%		

N: number of participants; % frequency; p: significance level ≤ 0.05 ; Chi-squared test

Table 7- Number of times students disrespected teachers and school staff

VARIABLE	BOYS		GIRLS	
	N	%	N	%
Have you missed with respect to teacher or done any harm to him (her)?	N	%	N	%
No time	149	75,3	165	84,6
Once or twice	35	17,7	18	9,2
Three or four times	9	4,5	7	3,6
Five or more times	5	2,5	5	2,6
Total	198	100%	195	100%
Have you missed with respect to an employee or done any harm to him (her)?	N	%	N	%
No time	191	96,5	190	97,5
Once or twice	4	2,0	3	1,5
Three or four times	1	0,5	0	0,0
Five or more times	5	2,5	2	1,0
Total	198	100%	195	100%

N: number of participants; % frequency

Table 8- Number of times the faculty and staff intervened in some bullying situation as perceived by students

VARIABLE	BOYS		GIRLS	
	N	%	N	%
How many times teachers did something to stop students from doing harm to others?	N	%	N	%
I do not know	3	1,5	2	1,0
Never	30	15,1	41	21,0
Almost never	55	27,8	59	30,3
Sometimes	55	27,8	50	25,6
Many times	55	27,8	43	22,1
Total	198	100%	195	100%
How many times the school staff did something to stop students from doing harm to others?	N	%	N	%
I do not know	10	5,1	20	10,3
Never	77	38,9	95	48,7
Almost never	46	23,2	30	15,4
Sometimes	39	19,7	33	16,9
Many times	26	13,1	17	8,7
Total	198	100%	195	100%

N: number of participants; % frequency

Table 9- Number of times students were alone because colleagues did not want their company.

How many times have you felt alone because the other students did not want your company?	BOYS		GIRLS		χ^2	p
	N	%	N	%		
Never felt alone	126	63,6	75	38,5	26,037	0,001
Once or twice	41	20,7	60	30,7		
Three or four times	13	6,6	29	14,9		
Five or more times	18	9,1	31	15,9		
Total	198	100%	195	100%		

N: number of participants; % frequency; p: significance level ≤ 0.05 ; χ^2 : Chi-squared test

Table 10- Students' views on the school recess

Do you like the school recess?	BOYS		GIRLS	
	N	%	N	%
I hate it	4	2,0	3	1,5
I do not like	3	1,5	6	3,1
Mais ou menos	58	29,3	57	29,2
I like it	50	25,3	46	23,6
I love it	83	41,9	83	42,6
Total	198	100%	195	100%

N: number of participants; % frequency

Regarding situations occurred during recesses, girls (11.3%) reported not having friends to play with at recess when compared to boys (4.0%). Based on this information, a

high number of both boys (61.1%) and girls (76.4%) claim that students just want to play with fights and pushes during school recess (Table 11).

Table 11- Situations occurred during school recess

What does it happen during school recess?	BOYS		GIRLS		χ^2	p
	N	%	N	%		
They walk behind me to tease me	34	17,2	47	24,1	2,884	0,089
I cannot play what I like	42	21,2	45	23,1	0,198	0,656
There are many boys and girls and there is no space to play	56	28,3	65	33,3	1,176	0,278
The other boys and / or girls just want to play with fights and pushes	121	61,1	149	76,4	10,694	0,001

N: number of participants; % frequency; p: significance level ≤ 0.05 ; Chi-squared test

Finally, according to responses, students were classified according to the role played in school bullying as not participant (70.0%); victim (17.0%); bully (8.1%) and bully-victim (4.9%). Overall, it was found that the largest differences were between groups that do not participate in bullying and bully when compared to victims and bully-victim. Bully-victims were those who were more willing to help a colleague who is suffering aggression ($X = 1.63$; $SD = 0.50$). Victims were those that most helped even if they did not know the person

($X = 1.57$; $SD = 0.50$), and these two groups were also those who reported the occurrence of the variable “walking behind me to tease me” ($X = 1.46$, $SD = 0.50$; $X = 1.37$; $SD = 0.50$). By contrast, bullies were a group different from victims and bully-victims ($X = 2.34$, $SD = 1.14$; $X = 2.32$; $SD = 1.29$), and bullies ($X = 1.47$; $SD = 0.9$) were those that least felt alone. Variable “the other boys just want to play with fights and pushes” had $p < 0.05$; however, the differences among groups were not sensitive to the post hoc Duncan test (Table 12).

Table 12- Differences among groups that do not participate in bullying, victims, bullies and bully-victims

What do you do when you see someone harming a student of your age?	NOT PARTICIPANT	VICTIM	BULLY	BULLY-VICTIM	F	p
	X(SD)	X(SD)	X(SD)	X(SD)		
I try to help as I can	1,31(0,46) ^a	1,54(0,50)	1,34(0,48)	1,63(0,50) ^b	6,016	0,001
I help even if I do not know the person	1,34(0,47) ^a	1,57(0,50) ^b	1,31(0,47) ^a	1,47(0,51)	4,492	0,004
How many times have you felt alone because the other students did not want your company?	1,73(0,97) ^a	2,34(1,14) ^b	1,47(0,91) ^a	2,32(1,29) ^b	9,295	0,001
What does it happen during school recess?						
I have no friends to play with	1,06(0,23)	1,16(0,37) ^a	1,03(0,18) ^b	1,11(0,31)	3,304	0,020
They walk behind me to tease me	1,13(0,34) ^a	1,46(0,50) ^b	1,19(0,40) ^a	1,37(0,50) ^b	14,159	0,001
The other boys and / or girls just want to play with fights and pushes	1,64(0,48)	1,84(0,37)	1,69(0,47)	1,79(0,42)	3,467	0,016

* X: average; SD: Standard deviation; a-b: post hoc Duncan; F: One-Way ANOVA; p: significance level $\leq 0:05$

Discussion

In this research, it was found that the percentage of girls was higher than boys regarding being bullying victim, but no association was found between the number of times they were victims and sexes. Although most studies have found boys as more victims (Brannon, 1999; Carvalhosa; Lima; Matos, 2001; Pereira et al., 2004; Chang et al., 2013; Obrdalj et al., 2013; Yang et al., 2013), the study by Kubwalo et al. (2013) found the same probability between sexes and in studies by Bentley and Li (1996) and Baldry (2003), more

girls were on the victimization situation. This can be the result of greater self-honesty of girls compared to boys (Lewis et al., 2013), mainly because the masculine stereotypes restrain since early the demonstration of weakness among men and women find greater social support in this regard at all ages (Brannon 1999).

Another hypothesis supported by literature is that the differences between sexes tend to decrease when taking into account the different types of aggressions (Iannotti; Nansel, 2009; Wang; Iannotti; Luk, 2012). Several studies have indicated that girls are more involved in indirect aggression or in direct

verbal aggression (Bandura; Ross; Ross, 1961; Cairns et al., 1989; Crick; Grotpeter, 1995; Brannon, 1999; Smith, 2004; Frisén; Jonsson; Persson, 2007; Wang; Iannotti; Nansel, 2009), which is in agreement with data found in this study. According to Obrdalj et al. (2013), men feel greater psychological need to demonstrate physical strength, which, combined with biological factors such as size and strength, and to social factors like higher likelihood to carry weapons and more encouragement from parents make them more prone to use physical aggression, causing serious injury and law violation (Brannon 1999).

However, the most prevalent victimization occurred with verbal aggressions, especially among girls, as also found in studies by Wang, Iannotti and Nansel (2009) in the United States, Vieno, Gini, and Santinello (2011) in Italy, and Chang et al. (2013) in Taiwan. In contrast, in these same studies, cyber bullying was quite significant, being present in 13-19% of participants involved in this type of behavior and more prevalent than ethnic victimization, which does not correspond with the reality of participants of the current study, in which only 1.5% of boys and 1.0% of girls reported being aggressed by virtual means. This may be due to the social conditions of these highly vulnerable children and adolescents, who have little or no access to such means.

The different types of bullying can occur within the school environment and its surroundings, especially in spaces and leisure time of students (Lourenço; Pereira, 2009). In this study, it was found that victimization occurs mainly in classrooms, school recesses, physical education classes or in spaces intended for it and after school. These findings confirm results obtained by Salmivalli, Voeten and Poskiparta (2011), who also point the classroom as the primary site of occurrence of bullying, perhaps for the long time students remain in this environment. Several studies have also indicated a high number of aggressions occurred in spaces and in Physical Education classes (Faith

et al., 2002; Vaillancourt et al., 2010; Melim; Pereira, 2013; Puhl; King, 2013). This reinforces the importance of the involvement of Physical Education teachers, along with all participants in the school environment to combat bullying because victimization is strongly related to lack of exercise and sedentary lifestyle in adulthood (Gray et al., 2008; Peterson; Puhl; Luedicke, 2012; Stankov; Olds; Cargo, 2012; Roman; Taylor, 2013). Thus, school communities must develop safe physical and social environments and implement proposals to help students learn about and adopt healthy choices (Levasseur; Kelvin; Grosskopf, 2013; Roman and Taylor, 2013).

In the present study, according to reports of victimized students, bullies were students in the same classroom and older than the victims. These findings were similar to those of Raimundo and Seixas (2009), highlighting the maintenance of unequal power, a bullying feature, by the social status within the class and physical factors related to older age, such as size and physical strength. Although Carvalhosa, Lima and Matos (2001) found that bullies, besides being older, were also at higher school years, the data reinforce the idea of abuse of power, making it impossible for the victim to defend himself (Salmivalli, 1997). It is noteworthy that the fact, found in this study, that older students attend the same class of younger students is quite common in schools of high social vulnerability profile, in which students have a high age / grade distortion index, according to numerous failures.

Students also indicated that the closest people to whom they rely on aggressions are parents or guardians, but girls seek for them in greater numbers than boys do. This again highlights the greater social support given to girls and the feeling of insecurity of boys in telling that they have been victimized, which would put in danger their stereotypical masculinity, often reinforced by parents (Brannon, 1999). In the current study, many victimized students tell no one about these aggressions and do not have anyone to defend

them, which emphasizes how poor of support are these children and adolescents in high social vulnerability (Kubwalo et al., 2013). However, when it comes to defending other colleagues from aggression, it was found that the data from this study are consistent with literature (Rigby; Slee, 1991; Salmivalli et al, 1996), pointing out girls as more defenders of victims than boys, which often play the role of spectators and encourage violence.

On issues related to being a bully and join the group to commit bullying, there were no differences between expected and observed frequency in relation to sex. However, boys had a higher percentage compared girls, as also found in other studies (Wolke et al., 2001; Seals; Young, 2003; Obrdalj et al., 2013). In contrast, the need men have to demonstrate more aggressiveness, which can be explained by human evolution, indicate that on average girls tend to present less aggressive behavior compared to boys. However, when very aggressive, children tend to be similar to each other regardless of sex. This fact is consistent with the study by Brannon (1999), in which the author shows that, even in extremely violent contexts, both sexes make use of violence to achieve their goals but in general, the objectives of men and women are different from each other.

Regarding the participation of faculty and staff in school bullying, it was found that students reported to disrespect teachers more times, which are also those who most intervened in situations of violence when compared to school staff, data that are in agreement to those of Lourenço and Pereira (2009), in which employees were those who most intervened in situations of violence. However, quite alarming information was found in this research, in which many of the students reported that teachers (47.0%) and employees (63.0%) never or almost never do anything to prevent a student to harm the other, thus favoring the occurrence of bullying, which occurs not only due to the lack of intervention or supervision (albeit minimal) of adults responsible for the organization and

structuring of students, but also to the weak relationships between students and teachers (Walker; Gresham, 1997; Lopes Neto; Saavedra, 2003; Jalón; Arias, 2013; Nygren et al., 2013; Rocha; Costa; Passos Neto, 2013). This fact highlights the importance of stronger presence of the teacher and everyone involved in the school environment, not only in the classroom, in order to ensure greater safety for students (Olweus, 1993; Pereira, 2008; Lourenço; Pereira, 2009).

In relation to school recesses, it was observed that girls reported more often being alone or to have no friends to play with, when compared to boys. This may be related to the higher percentage of girls who reported being bullying victims, considering that studies indicate loneliness and lack of close friends as risk factors for being bullying victim at school (Lisboa, 2005; Kubwalo et al., 2013). These factors added of a large school environment, little supervision and intervention of faculty and staff, and few options for materials and games, may have been reflected in the high percentage of students who only know how to play with fights and pushes during school recess. These practices are often used by more vigorous and fitter students in order to demonstrate higher status, therefore excluding those who do not stand out in relation to their abilities for the so-called dominant games (Higgins, 1994). This would also explain differences among bullying involvement roles, in which victims reported being more persecuted and lonely in the school recess, while bullies were those who least felt alone. These data reinforce the idea of Pinto and Branco (2011) that the stigma of children victims of bullying leads to hostile actions because their features are socially marked as negative or lower and therefore they deserve to be target of cruelties.

Concluding remarks

Bullying is a phenomenon of extreme complexity and needs to be deeply investigated, so its various facets can be better understood.

The participation roles, the most prevalent types of aggression and locations most used to commit these violent attitudes are information necessary when trying to seek alternatives to reduce such behavior. Therefore, this study aimed to describe how bullying occurs in high social vulnerability schools of Florianópolis and the roles played by students in this phenomenon.

It was observed in this study that boys and girls did not differ statistically in relation to the roles of bullying participation. Although recent studies have shown similar data, most of data found in literature contradict this finding. This information suggests that further studies comparing groups with and without risk situations should be conducted to verify that this social condition may have influenced these differences between sexes, or if in fact this behavior change observed in recent years is a trend towards gender equality, including the roles of bullying participation. In addition, this study pointed to the fragility of victimized children and adolescents who, in addition to living in risk conditions, do not find social support at school or support from peers, teachers or school staff. The results indicated that many teachers and employees are still negligent in relation to this violent behavior at school. Thus, factors

such as spacious environments, but with little supervision and sedentary behavior make these spaces propitious to the practice of bullying.

Although this study has the aim of describing this phenomenon in children and adolescents with high social vulnerability, it has limitations. As examples, the analysis of data was based on a unique perspective, which is the student himself by means of self-report, and the lack of groups of other social realities for possible comparisons of results.

However, the information obtained is of great importance to the academic community, considering that, despite being a rather discussed topic, bullying phenomenon still needs to be researched, especially in different communities. These results will allow the development of more effective intervention programs, according to the needs of each social group. In addition, the results suggest that combating bullying in schools will only be possible with the participation of all those involved in the school environment. Thus, the strengthening of relationships between school and students, and better preparation of teachers and staff to combat all kinds of aggression are extremely necessary to try to minimize the effects of risk factors to which these children are exposed and consequently, violence at school.

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Received on July 26, 2014

Approved on December 09, 2014

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