



Victimization and polyvictimization of Spanish children and youth: Results from a community sample[☆]

Noemí Pereda^{a,b,*}, Georgina Guilera^{a,b}, Judit Abad^a

^a Grup de Recerca en Victimització Infantil i Adolescent (GREVIA), Universitat de Barcelona, Spain

^b Institut de Recerca en Cervell, Cognició i Conducta (IR3C), Universitat de Barcelona, Spain

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 5 October 2013

Received in revised form 22 January 2014

Accepted 29 January 2014

Available online 1 March 2014

Keywords:

Polyvictimization

Spain

Adolescents

Victimology

ABSTRACT

Most research into adolescent victimization and polyvictimization has been carried out in the United States and in northern European countries. The present study aims to determine the prevalence of victimization and polyvictimization in a community sample of Spanish adolescents. The sample consisted of 1,107 youth ($M = 14.52$, $SD = 1.76$), 590 males and 517 females, randomly recruited from 7 secondary schools in a north-eastern region in Spain. The Spanish version of the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire was applied, assessing 6 aggregate categories of childhood victimization (conventional crimes, caregiver, peer and sibling, witnessed and indirect, sexual, and electronic victimization). A total of 83% of adolescents reported at least 1 type of victimization during their lives, and 68.6% during the last year. Boys were generally more exposed to conventional crimes (68.0%), and girls to emotional abuse by caregivers (23.0%) and to sexual (13.9%) and electronic (17.6%) victimization during their lifetime. Age differences obtained in victimization rates for the past year confirmed that peer and sibling victimization peak in early adolescence (33.9%). Witnessing community violence was more frequent in older adolescents (34.7%). Almost 20% of the sample were considered as polyvictims (i.e., experienced victimization in 7 or more forms of victimization). Adolescent polyvictims experienced victimization in 4 or more domains during their lifetime. This study adds new information on the epidemiology of victimization in the international context and is the first to do so from the perspective of a country in south-western Europe. It illustrates that Spanish youth experience a higher level of victimization than official records suggest, and that gender and age should be taken into account when analyzing this complex area of study.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

The victimization of children and youth has been confirmed in studies from all over the world (Finkelhor, 2008). However, the vast majority of studies have focused on particular types of victimization and have not analyzed the co-occurrence of different types of victimization which characterizes many of these cases (Herrenkohl & Herrenkohl, 2009). The fragmentation in the study of child victimization has made it impossible to obtain complete victimization profiles or to assess the situation faced by many children who are exposed to more than one form of violence. Indeed, the concept of *polyvictimization*, or the role of multiple victimization experiences in different episodes and their effect on a child's wellbeing (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007a), has been largely neglected in studies of child victimization.

Only recently has research begun to analyze the interrelationship between different kinds of victimization (Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, & Hamby, 2005a). Outside the United States, few studies have specifically addressed these research

[☆] This work was supported by the Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad (MEC) [grant number DER2012-38559-C03-02].

* Corresponding author address: Departament de Personalitat, Avaluació i Tractament Psicològics, Facultat de Psicologia, Universitat de Barcelona, Passeig Vall d'Hebron, 171, 08035 Barcelona, Spain.

questions. Examples are the studies by researchers in Canada (Cyr et al., 2013; Romano, Bell, & Billette, 2011), China (Chan, Brownridge, Yan, Fong, & Tiwari, 2011), and Malaysia (Nguyen, Dunne, & Le, 2009). In Europe, most studies providing data on polyvictimization have been conducted in northern countries such as the United Kingdom (Radford, Corral, Bradley, & Fisher, 2013), Finland (Ellonen & Salmi, 2011), and Sweden (Gustafsson, Nilsson, & Svedin, 2009).

The epidemiology of polyvictimization in children and adolescents has been shown to vary depending on the methods used to assess it. For example, studies of community samples from North America have established a rate of lifetime polyvictimization ranging from the 10% (e.g., Cyr et al., 2013; Finkelhor, Turner, Hamby, & Ormrod, 2011; Turner, Finkelhor, & Ormrod, 2010) to 32.5% (Ford, Wasser, & Connor, 2011). The results from studies in northern European countries present similar ranges. Radford et al. (2013) found that polyvictims aged 11–17 presented 13 or more types of victimization during their lifetime, while Ellonen and Salmi (2011) classified 9% of their sample as polyvictimized on the grounds that they had experienced at least five different interpersonal victimizations in different contexts in the previous year. Moreover, Gustafsson et al. (2009) also included traumatic experiences not related to interpersonal violence and obtained a mean of 2.7 traumatic events in the younger adolescent group and one of 4.0 in the older group.

One year rates of polyvictimization have often been defined using four types of victimization as the cut-off point. Using this criterion, rates of polyvictimization have ranged from 9% (Cyr et al., 2013) to 22% (Finkelhor et al., 2005a), depending on the sample. These studies also defined a high-polyvictim group with seven or more types of victimization during the past year, which presented rates between 1% (Cyr et al., 2013) and 7% (Finkelhor et al., 2005a). These results suggest the need to confirm the epidemiology of child victimization and the extent of polyvictimization in different sociocultural contexts.

In Spain, the studies published to date have focused on surveys of people ages 16 and over (Luque Reina, 2006). However, adolescents are cognitively capable of reporting past events and understanding victimization questionnaires; what is more, they seldom report their victimization experiences to adults. Although some studies in Spain have interviewed children and adolescents directly, such as the *Encuesta de Convivencia Escolar y Seguridad de Catalunya. Curso 2005–2006* [School Safety and Student Relations Survey in Catalonia. School Year 2005–2006, Departamento de Interior, Relaciones Institucionales y Participación, & Departamento de Educación (2007)], they usually focus on a narrow spectrum of victimization experiences. In addition, most child victimization studies have been carried out with data from social services (Sanmartín, 2002), even though child welfare data and police statistics on child victimization in Spain are incomplete and fail to provide a true picture of the extent of the problem. The testimonies of Spanish children and adolescents have been largely ignored by research aiming to assess the extent of victimization, in spite of the obvious relevance of information obtained directly from the children themselves. Children's testimonies have also been ignored by government agencies, which tend to rely on official records or professional reports rather than children's accounts (Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2001). On the other hand, giving children the opportunity to talk – often for the first time – about their experiences of victimization can be of great benefit to them (Save the Children, 2004). Certain forms of child victimization (e.g., conventional crimes, sibling victimization, emotional abuse) have been routinely overlooked in Spain. Indeed, most studies have documented a high level of victimization in a single area (e.g., bullying: Cerezo, 2009; Estévez, Murgui, & Musitu, 2008; Garaigordobil & Oñederra, 2008; cyberbullying: Buelga, Cava, & Musitu, 2010; dating violence: Fernández-Fuertes & Fuertes, 2010; González Méndez & Santana Hernández, 2001, among others), and few studies provide information on multiple victimization in Spanish youth. One of the exceptions is a study by Lila, Herrero, & Gracia (2008) who described the victimization experiences of 1,908 adolescents in the street, at school, and at home. They found that 58.4% of young people were victims in two of these three contexts.

The present study aims to determine the prevalence of victimization and polyvictimization in a community sample of Spanish adolescents over their lifespan and during a 1-year period. Most of the limited research in this area has been carried out in the United States and in northern European countries. There is a need for further studies in countries with different cultural backgrounds to disentangle the influences of the various cultural dimensions that may underlie the differences observed. Studying adolescents is important because of the unique problems faced by this age group and the current lack of information regarding their victimization experiences (see Rossman & Rosenberg, 1998). In addition, the identification of the possible causes of the cross-cultural variation in victimization rates may provide valid insights into the interaction between individual characteristics and culture. We expect that expanding the perspective of developmental victimology to Spain will permit meaningful cross-cultural comparisons.

Method

Sample

Participants were recruited from seven secondary schools in north-eastern Spain. The schools were stratified by socioeconomic status (low–medium–high). All participants in the study were between 12 and 17 years of age ($M = 14.52$, $SD = 1.76$). Students with cognitive and/or language difficulties, conditions which might undermine the validity of their responses to the assessment protocols, were excluded. The total sample comprised 1,107 young people (590 male and 517 female). Their main socio-demographic characteristics are shown in Table 1.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/344895>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/344895>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)