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agresión entre iguales**

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Abstract

Within the framework of the effort to educate young people to become citizens who are sensitive to what happens around them and are capable of exercising their rights in a responsible way, the aim of this study was twofold. Firstly, the objective was to define responsibilities in the school environment and analyze their relationship with educational stage and gender. Secondly, the study aimed to explore the relationship between responsibilities and coping strategies in situations of peer aggression. Participants were 1018 students aged between 10 and 14 from 12 schools in the Autonomous Region of the Basque Country, Spain. The study design was descriptive and cross-cutting, and two instruments were used: a Likert-type scale of responsibilities and a questionnaire outlining different scenarios involving different types of aggression. The statistical analyses were conducted with SPSS and revealed two responsibility factors. Significant differences were found between Primary and Secondary school students (participation: $p < .001$; civic response: $p < .01$) and between boys and girls, with girls scoring higher in both participation ($p < .001$) and civic response ($p < .001$). A

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significant relationship was found between participation in the classroom and response to direct aggression (H1: $p < .001$; H2: $p < .001$; H5: $p < .001$), relational aggression (H4: $p < .05$; H6: $p < .001$) and cyber-aggression (H3: $p < .05$; H6: $p < .001$). A significant relationship was observed also between the civic response factor and direct aggression (H1: $p < .001$; H2: $p < .001$; H5: $p < .001$), relational aggression (H4: $p < .001$; H6: $p < .001$) and cyber-aggression: H3: $p < .01$; H8: $p < .001$). The results suggest that engaging in tasks designed to promote responsibility at school encourages children to opt for strategies that show more solidarity with the victims of aggression, thus fostering the development of more supportive, ethical citizens. In this sense the data indicate that the implication in participatory activities in the classroom (establishing rules together, proposing improvements, etc.) is related to more positive attitudes in situations of aggression between peers and is a key element in preventing bullying in schools.

Keywords: responsibility, participation, citizenship, aggression, coping, primary education, secondary education.

Resumen

En el marco de preocupación por educar ciudadanos capaces de ejercitar sus derechos de forma responsable y con sensibilidad hacia lo que sucede alrededor, el propósito de esta investigación fue doble. Por un lado, delimitar factores de responsabilidad escolar y analizar su relación tanto con etapa educativa como con género. Por otro, explorar la relación entre responsabilidades y respuestas de afrontamiento en agresión entre iguales. Participaron 1018 estudiantes de 10 a 14 años, de 12 centros de la Comunidad Autónoma Vasca. El diseño del estudio fue descriptivo y transversal, utilizando dos instrumentos: una escala Likert de responsabilidades y un cuestionario con historias de diferentes tipos de agresión. Los análisis estadísticos con el SPSS mostraron dos factores de responsabilidad: participación y respuesta cívica. Se encontraron diferencias significativas entre Primaria y Secundaria (participación: $p < .001$; respuesta cívica: $p < .01$) y de género, con puntuaciones más altas para las chicas tanto en participación ($p < .001$) como en respuesta cívica ($p < .001$). Fue significativa la relación de participación en el aula con respuesta a agresión directa (H1: $p < .001$; H2: $p < .001$; H5: $p < .001$), relacional (H4: $p < .05$; H6: $p < .001$) y ciberagresión (H3: $p < .05$; H8: $p < .001$). En el factor de respuesta cívica también fue significativa la relación con agresión directa (H1: $p < .001$; H2: $p < .001$; H5: $p < .001$), relacional (H4: $p < .001$; H6: $p < .001$) y ciberagresión: H3: $p < .01$; H8: $p < .001$). Los resultados sugieren que tener tareas de responsabilidad en la escuela facilita que los estudiantes elijan más estrategias de apoyo a las víctimas de agresión, fomentando una ética ciudadana de cuidado. En este sentido, los datos empíricos indican que la implicación en actividades de participación en el aula (establecer reglas juntos, hacer propuestas de mejora...) se relaciona con actitudes de afrontamiento más positivas ante situaciones de agresión, siendo un punto clave para la prevención del bullying en contextos escolares.

Palabras clave: responsabilidad, participación, ciudadanía, agresión, afrontamiento, educación primaria, educación secundaria.

Introduction: responsibility as an object of research

Responsibility, which refers both to one's ability to act in a self-regulated manner in relation to fulfilling one's obligations and renouncing the immediate satisfaction of one's impulses and desires (Keller, 2012), and to a level of personal commitment to carrying out an action or task and being accountable for it (Jonsson & Jeppesen, 2013), is a key element of autonomy. Research in this field of study has charted the process by which personal responsibilities are acquired throughout evolutionary development, in relation to habits of autonomy (Monsalvo & Guaraná, 2008). The evolution of responsibilities linked to looking after oneself and one's possessions in the family and school environments has been the focus of both research studies and the conceptions developed by educators themselves (de la Caba & Lopez-Atxurra, 2015). Nevertheless, being autonomous, which implies knowing how to cope, think, choose, make decisions, self-manage and be responsible for self-care, also means assuming responsibilities not only in the strictly private sphere, but in the interpersonal and community spheres as well.

Studies focusing on the more social dimension of autonomy underscore responsibility in relation to others, emphasizing the fact that the subject in question is an active agent in connection not only with their own values and goals, but also with the needs of those around them. In other words, being autonomous means being able to interact with others, think about consequences, make decisions, be open and receptive to other points of view, help others and engage in actions designed to find joint solutions (Hoffmans-Gosset, 2000). In this sense, many cross-cultural studies have highlighted the fact that the concept of social responsibility is very similar to the idea of caring for others and the ability to make decisions which take other people into account and which trigger help-oriented actions (Kagitçibasi, 2007; Yeh, Bedford & Yang, 2009). In short, social responsibility is a multidimensional concept which goes beyond merely being respectful, to refer instead to an outlook and way

of living that is based on a sense of connection to one's fellow humans and the natural environment. It implies having the ability to think, to find and analyze information, to weigh up the complexities of different situations and to analyze alternative solutions from different perspectives. It requires the development of emotional skills that enable one to control one's frustration and anger, thus fostering behaviors geared towards maintaining justice and balance in groups, through active participation (Berman & la Farge, 1993).

The importance of social responsibility for education lies in its firm focus on values. This focus guides personal identity and establishes not only one's priorities, beliefs and attitudes, but also one's social behavior. Indeed, both help-oriented behaviors and civic-minded conduct are closely linked to the values of social responsibility. In this sense, European approaches to democratic citizenship have highlighted that educating citizens in a global, democratic and multicultural 21st-century society is a complex and controversial issue which poses a major challenge for education: how to train people to exercise their rights responsibly, both in relation to themselves and in connection with others (Audigier, 2000; Education Council, 2006).

The educational value of fostering social responsibility at school, at home and in the community has been identified as a key element of proposals designed to encourage the development of active, responsible citizens (Biesta, Lawy & Kelly, 2009; Geboers, Geijsel, Admiraal & Ten Dam, 2012; Lin, 2015; Naval, Print & Veldhuis, 2002). Some authors suggest that the effective development of social sensitivity and responsibility depends on evolutionary factors, although it mainly results from the experience of feeling listened to and belonging to groups which establish and maintain respectful relationships, and in which members participate, contribute and are committed (Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011). Research has highlighted the importance of assuming responsibilities and engaging in democratic relationships in one's everyday life (Álvarez-García, Dobarro, Rodríguez, Núñez & Álvarez, 2013; Berman, 1997; Campbell, 2008; Shiller, 2013; Verba, Burns & Schlozman, 2003). A number of studies have highlighted the positive effects of participation and engagement in group processes on personal wellbeing and willingness to learn (Zepke, 2013), civic values and attitudes to peaceful coexistence (Torney-Purta, Oswald & Schultz, 2001), responsible behavior (Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011) and dimensions closely linked to its development,

such as caring for others, perspective-taking, emotion regulation (Batson, Ahmad & Stocks, 2004; Gagen, 2013) and moral reasoning (Pratt, Skoe & Arnold, 2004).

Fostering students' participation in group processes is particularly important, since it may stimulate behaviors which have been found to help prevent violence (Hoskins, Barber, Van Nijlen & Villalba, 2011; Scheerens, 2011). Research into bullying has repeatedly and consistently found that school culture and classroom climate affect the civic-minded behavior that prompts peers to come to the victim's aid (Doll, Song & Siemers, 2003; Pepler, Craig & O'Connell, 2010; Rodkin, 2004). Asking for help, which is an effective strategy for putting a stop to bullying and strengthening resilience (understood as the ability to cope with and overcome adverse situations), is easier in contexts in which there is a climate of cooperation and participation among peers (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002). Group contexts influence personal attitudes, to the extent that students' social-emotional and social-cognitive skills only translate into real support in a favorable climate (Rock & Baird, 2012). Some studies have reported no significant differences as regards information processing variables or emotion regulation skills between those who defend their classmates and those who maintain a passive attitude during late childhood and early adolescence (Gini, 2006; Gini, Albiero, Benelli & Altoè, 2008). Empathy only appears to be significant for explaining the differences observed between boys who support the victim and boys who remain passive (Caravita, Di Blasio & Salmivalli, 2009).

Paradoxically, and despite their importance, empirical studies conducted with instruments designed to assess aspects related to social responsibility and active participation at school are scarce (Lin, 2015). There are however questionnaires which reflect a broad range of citizenship dimensions (Hoskins et al., 2011; Kerr, Lopes, Nelson, White, Cleaver & Benton, 2007), and some of these include engagement in the school group, as well as political knowledge or civic engagement in the local community (Whiteley, 2014). Although few studies have specified what precisely social responsibility is, outlining in detail the tasks required to function as citizens in the school environment (Ten Dam & Volman, 2004; Ten Dam, Geijsel, Reumerman & Ledoux, 2011), these papers constitute an interesting starting point and have been the framework of reference for this present study. Furthermore, few studies

have explicitly analyzed age differences in relation to social responsibility and connection with others (Inguglia, Ingoglia, Liga, Lo Coco & Lo Cricchio, 2014).

Aims

This study aims to identify school responsibilities, understood as school engagement tasks, paying particular attention to age and gender variables in order to explore their relationship with how students respond to different situations of peer aggression (direct, relational and cyber-aggression). The study's five specific aims were as follows:

- To identify the school responsibilities that students claim to assume at school.
- To extract the factors around which school responsibilities are grouped.
- To explore the role of educational stage in the assumption of responsibilities at school, specifically analyzing whether any significant differences exist between primary school (5th and 6th grade) and secondary school (1st and 2nd grade) students.
- To analyze the assumption of responsibilities at school in relation to gender, with the aim of identifying whether any significant differences exist between girls and boys.
- To analyze the possible association between support provided either directly to the victim or indirectly by finding someone in a position to help, and the perception of having fulfilled one's responsibilities at school. Our initial hypothesis was that those who responded by helping would score higher for responsibility than those who engaged in either passive or aggressive responses.

Method

Participants

Participants were 1018 students aged between 10 and 14, from the last two years of primary school (590: 49.7% girls and 50.3% boys) and the first two years of secondary school (428: 50.5% girls and 49.5% boys).

The study was conducted in 12 schools in the Autonomous Region of the Basque Country. In order to ensure a varied sample, when selecting the schools from which participants were drawn, both location (4 schools are located in large cities with over 100,000 inhabitants; 3 were located in mid-size towns with between 10,000 and 100,000 inhabitants; and 5 were located in small towns with less than 10,000 inhabitants) and type (7 were public schools and 5 were semi-private, i.e. private schools which receive some state funding) were taken into account.

Design and procedure

The research project was both descriptive and cross-sectional. The data collection process was carried out in two phases. Firstly, a letter was sent out to two hundred public and semi-private schools in the Autonomous Region of the Basque Country. With the aim of obtaining a varied sample, schools were selected through the purposive sampling of those whose management team and parents' association expressed an interest in participating. Both families and teachers received detailed written information about the aims of the research project and the commitments to be undertaken in the event of their agreeing to participate. Once the families and teachers had given their consent, students were asked to complete the questionnaires during class time. With the information obtained from the data analysis, written reports were compiled for each school, and interviews were held with the management team and school counselors to explain the results and their educational implications, in order to enable effective interventions.

Instruments

The social responsibility at school questionnaire

While previous studies on social responsibility (Ten Dam et al., 2011) constituted an important framework of reference for the compilation of this questionnaire, since they focus mainly on students' responsibilities in the community sphere (for example, community service), rather than in the classroom itself, an ad hoc questionnaire was developed. In this

questionnaire, which was compiled by the research team, students were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert-type scale (never, sometimes, fairly often, very often, always) how often they performed certain tasks.

An effort was made to ensure the content validity of the questionnaire from both a theoretical and empirical perspective. The starting point for constructing the items was the responsibilities identified as important in psychopedagogic literature. Items deemed hard to understand in the opinion of ten teachers were eliminated. The questionnaire included items on democratic participation in the classroom, with special attention being paid to dialog and negotiation (item examples: proposing rules for classroom dynamics, making proposals for improving the atmosphere in class, and establishing consequences for any failure to abide by the democratically agreed-upon rules). The instrument also included items designed to assess civic-minded responses to both everyday situations (for example: helping a classmate with their work) and threatening situations (for example: seeking help when a classmate is attacked). To analyze the internal validity of the questionnaire, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted using the principal components method. This enabled an exploration of the item structures and the identification of the different factors, as presented in the results section.

The situational questionnaire of responses to aggression

Based on the proposals made by previous qualitative studies (Naylor, Cowie & del Rey, 2001), eight brief stories were constructed with the aim of developing a situational questionnaire. The three stories depicting direct aggression describe a situation in which a group attacks a classmate, insulting and mocking them (S1), a situation in which a boy and a girl break some of a classmate's personal belongings (S2) and a situation in which a boy physically attacks a girl in his class (S5). Relational aggression was assessed by two stories, one in which some students divulge a classmate's secrets without their permission (S4), and another in which a boy is isolated and excluded from group activities (S6). Cyber-aggression was measured through three stories: the recording of a student being pushed and hit, and the sharing of the video on mobile telephones (S3), the recording of an attack by girls on another girl and the sharing of the video on the Internet (S7) and finally, a situation in

which some students record another doing something embarrassing, and then threaten to post the video on the Internet unless he does their homework (S8).

Bearing previous studies on coping strategies in mind (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005), six response options were given for each story. Options included two passive responses (walking away and simply observing), a negative reciprocity or aggressive option (doing the same to them, i.e. hitting the aggressor, breaking their things or insulting or threatening them, etc.) and two positive options (seeking help and assertively stopping the attack). The sixth response was an open option which stated «I wouldn't do any of the above; what I would do is:...»

Analysis

The data were analyzed using the SPSS statistical program. First of all, and as explained in the results section, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted. Next, for the two factors extracted, descriptive analyses and means comparisons were carried out using Student's *t*-tests for independent samples, in order to identify possible gender differences. Analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were also conducted using Fisher's F-test, in order to identify differences between the two educational stages studied, as well as any possible associations between responsibility and responses to aggression. Whenever the means comparisons proved significant, post hoc pairwise comparisons were carried out using Scheffé's method, with the aim of identifying the specific groups between which significant differences were observed.

Results

Social responsibility at school

To determine responsibilities and the existence of possible factors, items with more than 5% missing data (Little & Rubin, 2002) were eliminated, since this high non-response rate was considered a possible indication that the task was a poor representation of everyday classroom practice. The following items were therefore eliminated: helping an immigrant

student practice his or her language skills (10.3% missing data), chairing a debate (6.3%), mediating a conflict (9.1%), helping a classmate with mobility problems (6.6%), summing up the different opinions expressed during a classroom debate (6.5%), and attempting to reconcile different postures adopted during a group discussion (7.1%).

Once all those items with over 5% missing data had been eliminated, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted with principal axis factoring and Oblimin oblique rotation in order to determine the internal validity of the instrument and the structure of the items. The adequacy of the correlation matrix was verified, along with the significance of Bartlett's sphericity test ($p < .001$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin sampling adequacy (KMO index = .95). The Kaiser criterion (eigenvalue of over one) was used to extract the factors and a factor score of less than .30 was established as the cut-off criterion for exclusion.

The final factor solution for the school responsibility questionnaire comprised 18 items grouped into two factors, with a percentage of explained variance of 40.04%. The first factor was related to active participation and had a reliability of .84 with Cronbach's alpha. The second factor comprised those items which reflected a civic-minded response to situations of stress and threat, with a Cronbach's alpha of .74. Table I shows the items for each factor, along with the factor loadings and their means and standard deviations.

TABLE I: Social responsibility at school

	Factor 1	Factor 2	M	SD
	Active participation	Civic-minded response to threats		[v1]
Proposing rules for classroom dynamics	.74		2.78	1.22
Suggesting solutions which take the different interests of the group into account	.59		3.10	1.17
Proposing ways to improve the atmosphere in the classroom	.58		2.89	1.28
Negotiating the consequences of failing to respect democratically-established rules	.54		2.95	1.29
Using their free time to organize a school party or event	.54		2.93	1.40
Recording the proposals made during a class debate	.53		2.69	1.29
Making sure the agreed-upon deadlines established for tasks assigned to different members of the group are complied with	.51		3.43	1.21
Acting as the group spokesperson	.42		2.53	1.30
Showing a new classmate around the school (different facilities and services)	.40		2.72	1.43
Proposing activities which foster participation	.39		2.84	1.28
Helping a classmate with an assignment he or she finds difficult	.37		3.32	1.10
Proposing solutions in the group when carrying out a task	.36		3.20	1.19
Seeking help when a classmate is attacked		.66	3.55	1.26
Using non-violent methods to put a stop to aggressive behaviors		.59	2.88	1.28
Expressing displeasure or annoyance in a respectful manner		.56	3.06	1.18
Responding calmly to unpleasant or frustrating situations		.52	3.06	1.15
Refraining from doing something fun because it hurts others		.44	2.99	1.36
Seeking help in the event of being attacked		.43	2.99	1.44

Source: The social responsibility at school questionnaire

Differences regarding responsibilities in accordance with gender and educational stage

The results of the Student's *t*-test confirmed the association between gender and responsibility. Significant differences were observed for both the active participation factor ($t= 4.50, p<.001, md=.31$), with girls scoring higher ($M = 3.06, SD =.76$) than boys ($M= 2.83, SD=.72$) for proposing rules, solutions and improvements, etc., and the civic-minded response to threat factor ($t= 5.25, p<.001, md=.38$; girls: $M= 3.15, SD=.74$ and boys: $M= 2.86, SD=.80$), which reflects non-violent responses to situations of aggression and a willingness to seek help.

Significant differences were also found between the mean scores of the different year groups in relation to participation ($F= 18.20, p<.001, \eta^2 =.06$). The means were similar for both primary year groups (5th grade: $M= 3.08, SD=.78$ and 6th grade: $M= 3.08, SD=.73$), slightly lower for the 1st grade secondary year group ($M=2.92, SD=.74$), and lower still for the 2nd grade secondary group ($M= 2.54, SD=.65$). The post hoc tests (Scheffé) revealed that the greatest differences observed were between 2nd grade secondary school students and all the other year groups. 2nd grade secondary school students scored significantly lower than 1st grade secondary students ($md= -.37, SE =.08, p<.001$), 6th grade primary students ($md= -.54, SE=.08, p<.001$) and 5th grade primary students ($md= -.53, SE =.07, p<.001$). A similar pattern was detected in the civic-minded response factor ($F=4.35, p<.01$), although the effect size was small ($\zeta^2=.01$). The mean scores were similar for 5th grade primary ($M= 3.06, SD=.81$), 6th grade primary ($M= 3.05, SD=.76$) and 1st grade secondary students ($M= 3.08, SD=.83$), and were lower only for 2nd grade secondary students ($M= 2.80, SD=.78$). The post hoc tests (Scheffé) revealed that 2nd grade secondary students scored significantly lower than 1st grade secondary ($md = -.28, SE =.08, p<.01$), 6th grade primary ($md= -.25, SE =.08, p<.05$) and 5th grade primary students ($md= -.263, SE =.08, p<.01$).

Differences regarding responsibilities in accordance with responses to situations of peer aggression

As shown in the tables, an association was observed between responses to situations of aggression and scores obtained on the responsibility scale,

both as regards active participation in everyday classroom situations (table II) and in relation to civic-minded responses to stressful situations (table III). The ad hoc pairwise comparison test (Scheffé) enabled a comparison between the mean responsibility scores and the strategy chosen in response to each of the situations presented, in each of the two factors. The results of the test indicated the specific groups between which statistically significant differences were observed.

Direct aggression

Significant differences were found in all three cases of direct aggression between peers in both school responsibility dimensions.

As regards the active participation dimension, those who opted to seek help in response to S1 (insults and mocking) scored significantly higher than those who chose the negative reciprocity option «doing the same to them» ($md = .45, p < .05$). Similarly, those who chose the last option «none of the above» in response to S2 (breaking personal belongings), stating that they would opt instead for reparation («I'd mend what they broke», «I'd make them pay for the damage»), scored higher than those who chose the passive option of simply walking away ($md = .51, SE = .13, p < .001$) or the negative reciprocity option ($md = .39, SE = .11, p < .001$). In S5 (physical attack on a girl), those who opted to seek help scored significantly higher than both those who opted for the negative passive response of doing nothing ($md = .62, SE = .13, p < .01$) and those who chose the negative reciprocity response of «doing the same to them» ($md = .37, SE = .08, p < .01$).

In the civic-minded response to stressful situations dimension, students who chose to seek help scored higher than those opting for more passive responses, either observing without doing anything (S1: $md = .43, SE = .12, p < .05$; S2: $md = .40, SE = .12, p < .05$; S5: $md = .51, SE = .14, p < .05$) or walking away from the scene of the attack (S5: $md = .40, SE = .13, p < .05$). Those who opted to seek help also scored significantly higher than those who chose the aggressive or negative reciprocity response in both S1 ($md = .64, SE = .12, p < .001$) and S2 ($md = .47, SE = .10, p < .01$). Also, those who opted for the assertive response scored higher than those who chose the aggressive one in both S1 ($md = .50, SE = .11, p < .01$) and S2 ($md = .32, SE = .09, p < .05$).

Relational aggression

Significant differences were observed in both responsibility dimensions for both stories involving relational aggression. As regards the active participation in everyday classroom situations dimension, the highest means were observed for students who chose the assertive response to S4 (disclosing personal secrets without permission). Those who opted for the assertive response scored significantly higher than those who chose the passive response ($md = .36$, $SE = .09$, $p < .05$) and those who opted for negative reciprocity ($md = .25$, $SE = .06$, $p < .05$). In S6 (exclusion), those who opted to seek help scored higher than those who chose the passive response ($md = .60$, $SE = .15$, $p < .01$).

As regards the civic-minded response dimension, in both stories of relational aggression those who chose the assertive response scored higher than those who chose the passive option (S4: $md = .36$, $SE = .10$, $p < .05$; S6: $md = .49$, $SE = .10$, $p < .001$) and those who opted for the negative reciprocity response (S4: $md = .25$, $SE = .07$, $p < .05$).

Cyber-aggression

In the active participation dimension, statistically significant differences were observed in two of the three cyber-aggression stories (S3 and S8), and marginally significant differences were observed in the other one (S7: cyber-aggression between girls). In S3 (recording of an attack and dissemination of the images), those who chose the assertive response scored higher than those who chose the negative reciprocity one ($md = .26$, $SE = .07$, $p < .05$). In S8 (blackmail and threats), those who chose to seek help scored higher than those who opted to «do the same to them» ($md = .44$, $SE = .10$, $p < .01$).

In the civic-minded response dimension, those who chose the assertive response to S3 scored higher than those who chose the negative reciprocity response ($md = .25$, $SE = .07$, $p < .05$). Those who chose the assertive response to S8 scored higher than those who opted to respond passively ($md = .39$, $SE = .11$, $p < .05$) or with negative reciprocity ($md = .29$, $SE = .07$, $p < .05$). In the same story, those who said they would seek help also scored higher than those who chose to react passively (S8: $md = .45$, $SE = .13$, $p < .05$) and those who opted for the negative reciprocity response ($md = .39$, $SE = .10$, $p < .05$).

Table II presents the means, standard deviations and analyses of variance for the active school participation dimension, along with the effect size and significance, for each type of aggression and for all the stories analyzed. Table III shows the data for the civic-minded response factor, with *M*, *SD*, *F*, effect size and *p*.

TABLE II. School responsibility and responses to situations of aggression: means, standard deviations and analyses of variance for active participation

		Active participation in everyday classroom situations						<i>F</i>	η^2	
		<i>M (SD)</i>								
		1	2	3	4	5	6			
Direct aggression	H1	Insulting, mocking	2.93 .74	2.81 .83	2.93 .74	2.63 .61	3.08 .77	3.21 .83	4.60***	.03
	H2	Breaking personal items	2.67 .75	2.75 .74	2.96 .75	2.79 .80	3.05 .79	3.18 .66	4.88***	.03
	H5	Boy-girl attack	2.60 .66	2.82 .70	2.97 .78	2.85 .70	3.22 .81	2.99 .74	6.30***	.04
Relational aggression	H4	Disclosing secrets	2.90 .75	2.82 .71	2.99 .76	2.83 .76	3.10 .76	3.12 .77	2.57*	.01
	H6	Exclusion	2.87 .71	2.69 .79	2.95 .76	2.98 .77	3.29 .69	3.10 .72	4.23***	.02
Cyber-aggression	H3	Cyber-aggression between boys	2.81 .72	2.84 .85	3.03 .76	2.81 .73	2.99 .76	3.09 .77	2.66*	.01
	H7	Cyber-aggression between girls	2.93 .65	2.78 .67	2.93 .76	2.88 .80	3.09 .73	3.12 .82	2.07+	.01
	H8	Technologically-mediated blackmail	2.81 .73	2.82 .75	2.97 .73	2.77 .75	3.21 .81	2.91 .76	4.48***	.03

Notes 1: walk away; 2: do nothing, observe without intervening; 3: assertively stop; 4: do the same to them; 5: seek help; 6: none of the above

***<.001, **<.01, *<.05, +*p*<.10.

TABLE III. School responsibility and responses to situations of aggression: means, standard deviations and analyses of variance for civic-minded response

		Civic-minded response to situations of aggression							F	η^2
		M (SD)								
		1	2	3	4	5	6			
Direct aggression	H1	Insulting, mocking	2.99 .83	2.76 .80	3.06 .77	2.56 .74	3.20 .81	2.14 .81	6.83***	.04
	H2	Breaking personal items	2.76 .78	2.82 .82	3.07 .77	2.75 .82	3.23 .84	3.12 .70	6.23***	.04
	H5	Boy-girl attack	2.82 .69	2.71 .85	3.11 .80	2.96 .76	3.22 .85	3.04 .80	4.09***	.03
Relational aggression	H4	Disclosing secrets	2.88 .74	2.78 .79	3.14 .78	2.88 .78	2.98 .84	3.28 .75	5.80***	.04
	H6	Exclusion	2.92 .81	2.65 .81	3.14 .76	3.05 .81	3.09 .88	3.09 .80	5.36***	.03
Cyber-aggression	H3	Cyber-aggression between boys	2.84 .74	2.89 .71	3.12 .78	2.86 .77	3.10 .82	3.17 .91	3.68**	.02
	H7	Cyber-aggression between girls	2.85 .73	2.92 .77	3.08 .81	2.89 .80	3.13 .82	3.10 .74	2.11+	.01
	H8	Technological ly-mediated blackmail	2.73 .73	2.98 .71	3.12 .80	2.83 .70	3.22 .82	2.93 .79	5.78***	.04

Notes 1: walk away; 2: do nothing, observe without intervening; 3: assertively stop; 4: do the same to them; 5: seek help; 6: none of the above

***<.001, **<.01, *<.05, +p<.10.

Source for Tables II and III: The social responsibility at school questionnaire and the situational questionnaire of responses to aggression.

Discussion of the results and conclusions

Psychopedagogic literature has highlighted the importance of taking the interaction between personal and contextual factors into consideration. In this sense, the results of this study support the view that assumption of responsibilities is a pedagogically-relevant aspect that seems to be related to more positive responses to aggression (direct, relational and cyber-aggression). This is probably because when a student has the

opportunity to engage with and make a positive contribution to the group, responsibility and interpersonal care improve, which in turn fosters a good climate.

In this study, we expected to find that students who opted to seek help in response to different situations of peer aggression would assume responsibilities in the classroom more often than those who chose less positive response options. The results reveal that, as expected, those who adopted a more supportive attitude to aggression also scored higher for responsibility than those who chose more passive or aggressive responses. Those who chose assertive or proactive responses (I'd do something else) scored higher for responsibility than those who opted for a negative response (either passive or aggressive). This pattern was similar in relation to the three types of aggression studied.

Some studies focusing on coping strategies in response to peer aggression have found evidence that supportive behavior occurs when the atmosphere in the group is positive and the person in question feels recognized and acknowledged within that group (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005; Gini, Pozzoli & Hauser, 2011; Pöyhönen, Juvonen & Salmivalli, 2010; Sainio, Veenstra, Huitsing & Salmivalli, 2011). However, when people have little confidence that the group will permit supportive responses or when they have low expectations of knowing how to help, passive responses are more likely (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010). The assumption of responsibilities, which is the focus of this present study, may also be a relevant variable both for understanding the interaction which takes place between personal and group variables, and for designing educational interventions. The fact that responsibilities are associated with supportive attitudes is important from the perspective of the individual learning of citizenship skills, as well as because it is logical to suppose that assuming responsibilities also contributes to generating a positive climate in the group. Focusing on responsibilities may serve as a means of fostering prevention and coping, especially if we bear in mind that a climate of blurred responsibilities encourages indifference, as has been underscored by the ecological approach (Espelage & Swearer, 2004).

As regards the educational implications of this, the role played by the assumption of responsibilities in the classroom is particularly worth highlighting. The fact that those who consider themselves to engage more frequently in shared management tasks, such as proposing activities, establishing classroom rules, negotiating consequences, offering

suggestions for improvement and collaborating in everyday activities (timekeeper, group spokesperson, etc.) tend to choose more supportive strategies (assertively putting a stop to the situation, seeking help) than those who engage in these tasks less frequently (who tend to choose more passive strategies), contains a lesson well worth noting. It also contributes to generating an ethical framework based on care and community-building which offers citizenship experiences in everyday situations, and provides greater insight into why victims are either supported or abandoned. Educational guidelines for improvement can also be drawn from this. In short, the results of this study support the view that anything that implies increasing participatory responsibilities in the classroom contributes to providing a context in which students can gain real citizenship experience, while at the same time helping to prevent peer aggression (Campbell, 2008; Shiller, 2013; Verba et al., 2003).

In relation to educational intervention, it is also important to remember that gender is a vital element to take into account. Girls scored higher than boys in both responsibility factors. This highlights the need to establish educational practices which focus on socialization models, as a means of introducing a culture of care and responsibility into the classroom. Other studies have also found that the most civic-minded students with the most citizenship skills are girls with a high level of engagement at school and positive perceptions of school climate. Boys, on the other hand, tend more towards an attitude of indifference, have fewer citizenship skills and a negative perception of the climate at their school (Geboers, Gejsel, Admiraal & Ten Dam, 2014). The introduction of participatory socializing practices in the classroom may partly counteract the cultural effects of gender differences.

It should also be highlighted that although, from the perspective of evolutionary capacity, strategies and responsibility may be expected to improve with age, our findings indicate otherwise. Indeed, 2nd grade secondary school students scored lowest for responsibility. Some authors have already observed that primary school students are more susceptible to change, more pro-social and more willing to help than their older counterparts (Cross et al., 2011; Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi & Franzoni, 2008). In any case, it is important to note that these differences are not the result of evolutionary development, but rather a consequence of the progressive abandonment of everything that is not strictly academic in content.

A number of conclusions can therefore be drawn: 1) the questionnaire designed in this study to gather information about those responsibilities identified as important by psychopedagogic literature proved a useful instrument not only for identifying the specific social responsibilities assumed by students in the school environment, but also for relating these responsibilities to personal variables (gender, educational stage). 2) the significantly lower scores obtained in this questionnaire by both secondary school students and boys in general, highlight the need to design educational interventions to stimulate both engagement and participation. 3) the findings of this study are consistent with those reported by other authors who have underscored the fact that involvement in participatory activities in the classroom is related to more positive coping strategies in response to situations of aggression.

Limitations and future research

The data reported in this study are based on self-reports. Their value is therefore limited to this area. The fact that higher scores in the responsibility questionnaire, particularly in the participation in everyday school activities factor (establishing rules, negotiating consequences, suggesting improvements) appear to be associated with more positive, help-oriented responses to different types of peer aggression (direct aggression, relational aggression and cyber-aggression) suggests that fostering such participation may be an effective means of preventing and coping with problems of peer aggression. In this sense, studies carried out on bullying over the past decade have shown that help provided by peers is the best means of putting a stop to these practices. Nevertheless, future research in the field of educational intervention may perhaps wish to analyze whether increasing participatory tasks in the classroom does indeed lead to a perception by teachers of more positive attitudes towards aggression (assertiveness and help). It would also be a good idea to complement these studies with others focused specifically on analyzing participatory responsibilities at home and their relationship with help-oriented attitudes at school. More qualitative studies, with interviews and observations, are also recommended.

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