ATTITUDES OF BULLYING PRACTICES BYSTANDERS STUDENTS AT SCHOOL¹

Igor Soares Vieira*
Andreia Poschi Barbosa Torales**
Marlizete Maldonado Vargas***
Cristiane Costa da Cunha Oliveira****

ABSTRACT

The objective was to analyze the prevalence of students who were bystander's violence situations at school, making identification about attitudes of these observers on the issue of *bullying* in Aracaju, Nossa Senhora do Socorro, Sergipe, Brazil. Cross quantitative study was carried out from August 2012 to September 2013. There were 753 adolescent's participants. The sampling plan was based on the population of students enrolled in public schools of Grande Aracaju. We used the questionnaire "Peer Violence". The subjects who have witnessed violent situations were (51.4%). On ways to more observed aggression, verbal *bullying* was the most frequent (55.60%), followed by physical *bullying* (29%). The main reactions of victims of *bullying*, and who witnessed some aggression situation was not retaliate (42.6%), asking the aggressor to stop (21.8%) and calling an adult (12.87%). The victims were supported positively by the bystanders when the perpetrator was mostly male, older and integrated in the same class. Support for the aggressor occurred when ill-treatment was perpetuated by older individuals, male and belonging to another class. Bystanders have no yet constituted a network of supporting, and they have been engaged passively in ending *bullying*.

Keywords: Bullying. Violence. Adolescent behavior. Epidemiology.

INTRODUCTION

The school is one of the main environments responsible for process of developing social skills of the child, so the quality of the relationships that children establish equal groups, can be both capable to potentialize the skills and positive social skills, such as inappropriate or deviant behaviors binding ⁽¹⁾.

In the school environment socially inappropriate behaviors tend to configure as bullying, a term that does not have a translation for the Portuguese language, but can be defined as a set of aggressive attitudes and/or intimidating, intentional and repetitive practiced between individuals or groups of the same, that occurs without apparent motivation, and that usually cause physical and psychological suffering on the victims. The bullying can be classified as direct, represented by physical

assaults, theft and damage of belongings, nicknames, offensive gestures and verbal assaults; or indirectly perpetrated usually when the victim is not present, such as spreading rumors pejoratives, socially excluded and/or adopt attitudes of indifference in the face of the individual (2).

The spectator, has great importance in the study of the dynamics of *bullying*, because it constitutes the third element after the assailant and victim, and acquires a special attention from researchers (3, 4, 5, 6). Explanations about his role at the scene of *bullyng* and your silence if they refer to the fear of being the next victim or be punished by the authorities to be considered as co-author of violence; the need to put on the side of the stronger (attackers) not to feel excluded from the Group; the lack of social skills to intervene in relation to violence, which limits its actions; the belief that children and young people are so accustomed to violence in different

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^{*} Psychologist, Master and PhD student in Health and Behavior - Catholic University of Pelotas (UCPEL). Pelotas - RS, Brazil. E-mail: igosv@hotmail.com

^{**} Psychologist, Master and PhD student in Health and Environment - Tiradentes University (UNIT). Aracaju - SE, Brazil. E-mail: andreiaposchi@msn.com

^{***} Psychologist, doctor in Psychology, Science and Profession. Permanent member of the Master and Doctorate in Health and Environment - Tiradentes University (UNIT) Program and Researcher of the Institute of Technology and Research (ITP). E-mail: marlizete_maldonado@itp.org.br

^{****} Dental Surgeon, doctor in Collective Health. Permanent member of the Master and Doctorate in Health and Environment Tiradentes University (UNIT) Program and Researcher of the Institute of Technology and Research (ITP). E-mail: cristiane_cunha@itp.org.br

social environments who may perceive it as normal and natural, also in the school environment; or even, explanations based on identification with the aggressor and the satisfaction to witness the scene. All these explanations, however, are restricted to violence itself, ignoring that the phenomenon is much more complex and systemic, involving society, the family and the subjectivity of the subjects involved in *bullying*⁽⁶⁾.

A study by the Brazilian Multi-Professional Association of child and adolescent protection (ABRAPIA) pointed out that about 80% of the students do not approve acts of bullying and most witnesses feel empathy for the victims, condemns the behavior of the aggressors and want any effective intervention is carried out by the school⁽³⁾.

In most instances of *bullying* colleagues and officials of schools the witness, however, teachers tend to cloak/hide cases, using, for example social exclusion and intimidation⁽⁵⁾. Some negative consequences among viewers of *bullying* are increased anxiety, decrease in levels of learning, in addition to the significant negative impact on various mental health indicators (such as levels of depression, hostility, paranoia)⁽⁷⁾. Other consequences observed in spectators are psychosomatic complaints such as headaches and associated with lower levels of academic achievement and social adjustment⁽⁸⁾.

Thescarcity of studies demonstrating the perception of viewers of *bullying* on the places of occurrence, the attitudes of those who witness violence, profile of the victims and aggressors, causes the present study is justified for political planning that may be more effective.

In this context it was noted the importance of raising the attitudes of students *bullying* viewers, and understand whether they refer to the explanations already raised by the authors studied or bring new issues that might contribute to the scientific knowledge on the subject and substantiate proposals for preventive interventions. The aim of this study was to identify the attitude of student's school violence viewers and its prevalence in greater Aracaju, Sergipe.

METHODOLOGY

Cross-sectional study of a quantitative nature, developed in the period of August 2012 to

September 2013. Participated in 753 teenagers of both sexes, aged between 13 and 20 years. The sample of this research plan was based on the population of students enrolled in State public schools of greater Aracaju, where the municipalities were selected from Aracaju and Nossa Senhora do Socorro, divided into two strata, (8th and 9th year of elementary school and first and second grade of high school), according to information provided by the State Department of education of Sergipe.

So that the study could have a representative character the sampling plan was calculated by means of random selection by conglomerate for choosing schools, respecting the criteria of proportionality of the number of students in the two above mentioned strata.

It was used a questionnaire developed at the University of Lisbon ⁽⁹⁾ and validated in Brazil ⁽¹⁰⁾ which aims to identify student's aggressors, victims and bystanders frequent situations of ill-treatment. It is a self-administered questionnaire, divided into three parts, in addition to the characterization of the subject.

Data collection was performed by four previously trained applicators. The researchers explained the objectives of the study all students present in class. The questionnaires were applied to all those who agreed to participate in the survey with the return of the terms of consent. The instrument was answered in the classroom, individually, confidentially and anonymously, under the supervision of the applicators.

Analyses were carried out and frequency distribution analysis with application of bivariate Pearson correlation test and Chi-square. The Monte Carlo test to verify the linear association between the age and the number of victims targeted by the subject. The results in that the assumptions of the Chi-square test were not met the Test to check the V-Cramer degree of Association, considering how little effect when r = 0.1, 0.3 and big medium r = r = 0.5. P values under 0.05 were considered indicative of statistical significance.

We included all kids present in classrooms who have agreed to participate in the study by means of informed consent (TFCC) signed by those responsible. Excluded students who have not responded to 10% or more of the issues.

The project was approved by the ethics and Research Committee (CEP) of Tiradentes

University/IF (Protocol # 251211), being the material here presented the result of original research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

753 teenagers participated in the study, with an average age of 15.78 (DP = 1.61 years), with 60.7% 39.3% female and male. A significant percentage of students experienced school failure experiences (43.8%).

Most students (66.8%) said they had parents living in the same House. As regards the marital status of the parents, 50.3% were married couples, 23.8%, separated, divorced and 22.7%, 18.3% distributed among single, widowed and in stable. Most parents did not complete elementary school (43.1%) and only 26.5% had completed high school, while 31% of mothers had finished high school and 14.8% completed elementary school (x^2 = 315.339; p = 0.001). With respect to the number of brothers, 89.7% have brothers, being 45.3% one to two brothers and 54.7% more than three brothers.

Among the total of students surveyed, 30.8% were victims and 25.6% of the students acted as aggressors, with no significant difference between sexes (p > 0.05). Most of the students witnessed violence (48.7%), being this prevalence higher in comparison with other studies (11, 12). Was observed higher incidence of *bullying* in the initial years, and with the next school year (after the 9th year) the violence decrease (p < 0.015). There was a lower incidence of *bullying* with increasing age (Monte Carlo test for linear Association = 3.751; p = 0.035; IC = (0.034 - 0.061) (Table1). The literature points to a decrease in

the number of victims as schooling, which is due to the increase in social competence of students added to the reduction of vulnerability to situations of abuse. Together, these data could justify this drop in rates of victimization found in participants of this study (13).

The defense of aggressive behavior by the observer also tends to decrease with age, as well as there is less likely to sympathize with the victims or intervene on your behalf (14). Thus, the relationship between the fellow seems to be more important for older students, whose potential for protection with colleagues can be inhibited by the expectations and standards of their group. Children under the age of nine years had not been affected by this "social inhibition" against the help. Students who had overcome these pressures and defended the victims were predisposed to have high social status and be well liked by colleagues. They also were more empathetic, emotionally stable and cognitively kids with a good development⁽⁴⁾.

With regard to forms of aggression more observed, the subject of this study pointed to the verbal bullying in higher frequency (55.60%) (joys, humiliations, insults), followed by the *bullying* physical (29%) (kicks, kick, concussion, punches, kicks). In respect of other forms of victimization, consider that some guys go through situations larceny (4.30%); threats (8.20%); destruction of personal objects or clothing (2.80%%). Compared to males (31%), the girls (47%) had more violent behaviors connected, on the observer's perspective, Social exclusion and Verbal aggression than boys.

Table 1. Distribution of students who witnessed or not *bullying* situations according to age group-Greater Aracaju, Brazil, 2013.

Age group	Witnessed Bullyng situation								
	Not responded	Yes			No	Total			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N		
13-14	10	5.7	110	62.5	56	31.8	176		
15-16	36	11.7	158	51.1	115	37.2	309		
17-18	45	19.4	91	39.2	96	41.4	232		
19-20	5	16.1	6	19.4	20	64.5	31		
Total	96	12.8	365	48.8	287	38.4	748		

Chi-square test x 2 = 40.528/p = 0.0001. Monte Carlo p = 0.035; IC = (0.034 - 0.061).

The girls showed more expressive results, with regard to social exclusion and verbal aggression; pointing, a tendency to be involved in situations of indirect or verbal aggression and the boys in situations of physical assaults.

By analyzing the locations at which most students observe violent acts, the high school students (2nd and 3rd year), claim to be the classroom as a place of higher incidence of bullying (8.31% to 7.65%, respectively), which is also observed in other studies (11). In the 8th and 9thyear predominated the answers of those who pointed to the range as ideal place for aggressors approach their victims (17.30% and 17.30%, respectively). Corroborating finding, other study confirm that the classroom is the place greater occurrence of bullying between pupils of elementary schooland middle school the time intervals⁽¹⁵⁾.

About 82% of the viewers do not approve acts of *bullying* and condemn the behavior of the authors (92.3%), though, has not been the primary reaction of a target of *bullying*, according to viewers. The data showed that the most frequent attitude of those who witness a situation of aggression, is to "do nothing" (47.50%). There were no significant differences between the school years surveyed (p = 0.55). Nevertheless, the "ask the attacker to stop" (22.40%) is pointed to by 20% of viewers, followed by the "resort to an adult" (15.0%) ($x^2 = 1.33/p = 0.44$).

The repudiation aggressive practices were also very common among students, however, was not to conduct more verified (16). Pointed out that "doing nothing", "don't get involved" and only "observe" might be most representative indicators leading to the removal order, causing viewers to observe only the incidents of assault without intervening. In the present study it was noted that viewers who don't get involved accounted for the majority of students, within the Group of witnesses.

The fear of becoming the next victim of *bullying* causes silence predominates, leaving the victims themselves or authorities the arrangements and initiatives necessary for the control, combat and prevent the phenomenon. This climate of silence can be explained as an assertion of power by the aggressor, which helps

cover up the prevalence of these acts. In other cases, viewers are supporting and encouraging the attacks. Although internally does not comply with the posture of the aggressors, sharing the same way to falsely hold before the group, and so become perpetrators of *bullying*. Be silent before the assault is so serious and reprehensible as the stimulus itself to violence. Set up a species of manifestation of support to authors of *bullying*, as they can understand the silence as approval of his conduct, or even, the spotter coresponsibility by violence itself thrown against the victim⁽³⁾.

The fact is that, when the witnesses interfere and try to stop the bullying, these actions are effective in most cases. Even if the *bullying* behavior continue, the subjective experience of a victim that has one or more adherents among peers is probably very different from a victim who has no one on your side. Therefore, it is important to encourage the use of that power from the group, making the perpetrators of *bullying* feel without the social support required⁽¹⁷⁾.

The students said that they like the relationship with the colleagues and the school environment (80%),despite reports perceived situations of school violence. Maybe, because they are single episodes and predominantly verbal, and physical, not affect the positive assessment that students have made the school and the relationship with his colleagues. The high rates of positive assessments in conjunction with the rates of victimization open prospects for that, when children exhibit aggressive behavior directed towards socially accepted goals are not perceived negatively as was pointed out in a study with the State School of São Paulo⁽¹⁸⁾.

About the attitudes that could or should take to help those who suffer *bullying* at school, after the grouping of responses into categories of analysis, it was found that 21.2% of students believe that talk to the managers, inspectors, parents, teachers and police would be sufficient to help the victims. Already, 14% of the students showed that expel the perpetrator of the school would solve the problem, and 8.25% only stressed that the direction and employees should be more attentive to situations of abuse.

There is a strong association between the reasons of the attackers and the attitudes of spectators, i.e. may refer to the viewers 'attitudes differ in the face of several reasons of perpetuity of aggression. The reports revealed

the passive attitudes of viewer's face, mainly, to the playful banter, reactions to violent provocations, irritating attitudes and revenge of the attackers to their victims (VCramer = 0717; p= 0.001). (Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution frequency of theattitudes of the spectators according to the reasons of the attackers-Greater Aracaju, Brazil, 2013.

	Reasons for the aggressor							
The observer's Attitude ^{the} *	Revenge	Defense of others	Contempt	Joke	Reaction to provocation	Irritation	Another	Total
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n
I did nothing	5 (33.3)	7 (30.4)	2 (13.3)	32 (45.1)	17 (42.5)	12 (41.4)	3 (75.0)	78
I ran/I was afraid	1 (6.7)	2 (8.7)	1 (6.7)	1 (1.4)	1 (2.5)	1 (3.4)	1 (25.0)	8
I resorted to an adult	2 (13.3)	3 (13.0)	3 (20.0)	10 (14.1)	4 (10.0)	2 (6.9)	0 (0.0)	24
I asked the attacker to stop	2 (13.3)	8 (34.8)	3 (20.0)	7 (9.9)	10 (25.0)	6 (20.7)	0 (0.0)	36
I went to see	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	12 (16.9)	1 (2.5)	1 (3.4)	0 (0.0)	14
I supported the aggressor	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (6.9)	0 (0.0)	2
Advised to move away from the aggressor	2 (13.3)	2 (8.7)	6 (40.0)	4 (5.6)	3 (7.5)	1 (3.4)	0 (0.0)	18
Laughs at the situation	1 (6.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.4)	1 (2.5)	2 (6.9)	0 (0.0)	5
I supported the assaulted	1 (6.7)	1 (4.3)	0 (0.0)	3 (4.2)	3 (7.5)	1 (3.4)	0 (0.0)	9
Another	1 (6.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.4)	0 (0.0)	1 (3.4)	0 (0.0)	3
Total	15 (100.0)	23 (100.0)	15 (100.0)	71 (100.0)	40 (100.0)	29 (100.0)	4 (100.0)	197

the Phi = 0732; * VCramer = 0717; p= 0.001

For the most part, passive attitudes were identified of the spectators face the "jokes", "reactions to provocation" and "irritation" of the attackers, rather than take an attitude of "ask the attacker to stop" when this "reacts to provocations. Seem to ignore, downgrade or refuse to meet the intense emotional wounds that this phenomenon may cause those who assaults. However, even in the face of "jokes" of the attackers, there have been those, although to a lesser percentage, who took another kind of attitudes as "resort to an" adult "I asked the attacker to stop" and "advise the victim away from the aggressor".

As consequences, positive relations of friendship are compromised, highlighting those that are not socially satisfactory. That is, the aggressors have positive attitudes about violence and the perception of social competence seems to be built based on the dominion over the other and the social role that aggressive ducts provide them with ⁽¹⁹⁾.

It can be considered that there is a positive association between the attitudes of spectators and the characteristics of the attackers. The victims are supported positively by viewers, when the attacker is male; older and are integrated in the same class (p=0.001), considering the attitudes "ask the

attacker to stop" (aggression), "resort to an adult" and "advised her to move away from the aggressor". It might also be noted that the attitude of "supporting the aggressor" on the part of viewers is considered especially when the assaults are perpetuated by individuals older, male and belonging to another class of another year (table 3).

Apathetic Attitudes of those responsible for educational action and not to reprimand students provocateurs for the same (even by teachers) can lead students to believe not only the principle that this support is scarce, asmay result in the school drop-out. This fact, for all the implications, as the relationship between low education and difficulties in entering the labour market, can lead to social exclusion (20). It was revealed in the point of view of these students, disabilities of these agents more adults tend to immediate resolution of conflicts between pairs rather than an anti-bullying policy more enduring.

Relatively simple attitudes of respect and affection on the part of the teacher can be very positive and can contribute to the reduction of violence in the school environment. In view of the spectators, the support offered to victims by the teachers, can also be expressed without the knowledge of other students.

Bullying and victimization can be more visible role to the school staff (teachers, administrators and school psychologists), so there is a need for greater awareness of *bullying* episodes exist and involve several people in various functions, including a large number of students who witness these episodes. It is

important that those responsible for the action to work with students who witness *bullying*, to identify and plan for positive behavioral strategies to combat *bullying*, promote the empathy or the construction of personal and interpersonal forces so they can take on the role of "defender" instead of "doing nothing".

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of theattitudes of viewers in relation to characteristics of the attackers-greater Aracaju, Brazil, 2013.

	Characteristics of Perpetrators							
Age *				The sex		Belongs to class [#]		
Attitudes of the observer	Older	More new	The same age	Men's.	WOM.	In your class	Another class of the same year	Another class of another year
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
I did nothing	15 (35.7)	4 (9.5)	23 (54.8)	29 (69.0)	13 (31.0)	18 (52.0)	7 (20.6)	9 (26.5)
I ran/I was afraid	3 (75.0)	1 (25.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (75.0)	1 (25.0)	1 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	2 (66.7)
I resorted to an adult	14 (60.9)	2 (8.7)	7 (30.4)	11 (47.8)	12 (52.2)	10 (45.5)	3 (13.6)	9 (40.9)
I asked the attacker to stop	19 (76.0)	0 (0.0)	6 (24.0)	14 (56.0)	11 (44.0)	10 (47.6)	3 (14.3)	8 (38.1)
I went to see	1 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	2 (66.7)	3 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Advised to move away from the aggressor	8 (61.6)	1 (7.7)	4 (30.8)	9 (69.2)	4 (30.8)	9 (69.2)	2 (15.4)	2 (15.4)
I supported the aggressor	3 (75.0)	1 (25.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (75.0)	1 (25.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (25.0)	3 (75.0)
Another	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Total	57	9	49	72	43	52	16	33

^{*}Fourteen students did not respond to the question. * VCramer = 0471, p= 0.001; the VCramer = 0477, p= 0.001; v VCramer = 0797, p= 0.001.

As intervention strategy in the face of this problem, the school management team could reconsider its educational policy in favour of diversity. Flagstone daily life stories in the school context involving violence, requiring all of us a position and a proactive attitude to combat this problem, which is not always recognized by the institution. The denial of this problem is based on ignorance, which can be connected to an underestimation of the importance of the violence more blurred in the victims' experience at school (19).

CONCLUSION

It was found that despite the absolute majority of viewers declare not to approve the acts of bullying at school, they had attitudes that could interfere positively in the extinction of the assault. Impunity in the diverse environments of our society and systemic corruption in all walks of life in the country, can be an important factor to feed the passivity and even indifference of students surveyed front of violence at school. Another relevant factor was the low incidence of search-related attitudes of teachers or other school staff, which leads to pay attention to the lack of confidence/support educators perceived by viewers of bullying.

It is necessary that the school and the community with the support of the families, take more firmly positions that any kind of aggression is unacceptable, not because of rigid laws or punishment, but for empathy and sense of solidarity. Awareness-raising actions in the school space, should be priority as educational action for the promotion of health and social welfare. It is observed that this is not possible without a network work involving professionals from the various fields of knowledge, students, their families and the community. The family and the school, for the

key role that engaged in developing social skills of children and adolescents, should be the focus in the implementation of strategies for conflict resolution. Thus, the development of individual and social skills should be part of these strategies to develop in children and conducts preventive or restorative probes, when respect for the other, equity and harmony in the school environment are or run the risk of being raped.

ATITUDES DE ALUNOS ESPECTADORES DE PRÁTICAS DE BULLYING NA ESCOLA

RESUMO

O objetivo foi analisar a prevalência de alunos que testemunham situações de violência escolar, com identificação de atitudes desses espectadores na problemática do *bullying* em Aracaju e Nossa Senhora do Socorro, Sergipe, Brasil. Estudo transversal de natureza quantitativa, desenvolvido no período de agosto de 2012 a setembro de 2013. Participaram 753 adolescentes. O plano amostral foi baseado na população de alunos matriculados em escolas públicas estaduais da Grande Aracaju. Foi utilizado um questionário validado de Violência entre Pares desenvolvido na Universidade de Lisboa. Mais da metade dos sujeitos da pesquisa (51,4%) testemunharam situações de violência. Entre formas de agressão mais observadas, o *bullying* verbal teve maior frequência (55,60%), seguido do *bullying* físico (29%). As principais reações das vítimas de *bullying*, e dos que presenciaram alguma situação de agressão foi não revidar (42,6%), pedir ao agressor para parar (21,8%) e recorrer a um adulto (12,87%). As vítimas foram apoiadas positivamente pelos espectadores principalmente quando o agressor era do sexo masculino, mais velho e integrado na mesma turma. O apoio ao agressor ocorreu quando maus-tratos foram perpetuados por indivíduos mais velhos, do sexo masculino e pertencentes a outra turma. Os espectadores ainda não constituem uma rede de amparo, envolvendo-se passivamente no término do *bullying*.

Palavras-chave: Bullying. Violência. Comportamento do Adolescente. Epidemiologia.

ACTITUDES DE ALUMNOS ESPECTADORES DE PRÁCTICAS DE BULLYING EN LA ESCUELA

RESUMEN

El objetivo fue analizar la prevalencia de alumnos que atestiguaron situaciones de violencia escolar, con identificación de actitudes de estos espectadores en la problemática del acoso escolar (*bullying*) en Aracaju y Nossa Senhora do Socorro, Sergipe, Brasil. Estudio transversal de naturaleza cuantitativa, desarrollado en el período de agosto de 2012 a septiembre de 2013. Participaron 753 adolescentes. El método de muestreo fue basado en la población de alumnos inscriptos en escuelas públicas estatales de Grande Aracaju. Fue utilizado un cuestionario nombrado de Violencia entre Pares desarrollado en la Universidad de Lisboa. Más de la mitad de los sujetos de la investigación (51,4%) atestiguaron situación de violencia. Entre las formas de agresiones más observadas, el acoso escolar (*bullying*) verbal tuvo mayor frecuencia (55,60%), seguido del *bullying* físico (29%). Las principales reacciones de las víctimas de *bullying*, y de los que presenciaron alguna situación de agresión fue no reaccionar (42,6%); pedir al agresor a que parara (21,8%); y recurrir a un adulto (12,87%). Las víctimas fueron apoyadas positivamente por los espectadores, principalmente cuando el agresor era del sexo masculino, mayor e integrado en el mismo grupo. El apoyo al agresor ocurrió cuando malos tratos fueron perpetuados por individuos mayores, del sexo masculino y pertenecientes a otro grupo. Los espectadores todavía no constituyen una red de amparo, involucrándose pasivamente en el término del acoso.

Palabras clave: Bullying. Violencia. Comportamiento del Adolescente. Epidemiología.

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Corresponding author: Cristiane Costa da Cunha Oliveira. Instituto de Tecnologia e Pesquisa- ITP, Universidade Tiradentes, Av. Murilo Dantas, 300, Prédio do ITP, Bairro Farolândia, CEP 49032-490 Aracaju, Sergipe, Brasil. Telefone: 3218-2180 (2553). E-mail: cristiane_cunha@itp.org.br

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