

The impact of peer abuse (bullying) on school performance

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Abstract

Introduction. Academic performance roughly expresses what a person has learned as a result of a process of instruction or training. So it is that the literature indicates different types of abuse that influence school performance. Physical and emotional abuse inflicted at home by mothers, fathers or caretakers, as well as the frequency of abuse, are associated with the academic performance of minor children.

Objective. The object of this research was to determine the possible existence of abuse at public and private schools in Guatemala City, and based on this, to establish whether there was a relationship between school abuse and academic performance, controlling for certain variables that have been associated with the latter.

Method. The sample was composed of a total of 500 subjects, male and female, belonging to different social strata, students from the first year of secondary education at public and private schools in different districts of Guatemala City. All subjects completed nine scales which measured current abuse at school and other variables, including certain factors that affect performance and which were taken as control variables in this research. Furthermore, all subjects completed a test of academic performance in the area of mathematics.

Results and Conclusions. Results indicated that 56% of subjects who participated in this research reported having been emotionally and/or physically abused by their teachers in the month prior to application of the scale designed for this purpose. Likewise, results indicate that some variables associated with school abuse are: type of school (public, private), prevalence of bullying, and the practice of an authoritarian model of teaching/learning, as well as other variables. On the other hand, students from private schools showed better performance than their peers at public schools, without this being associated with any significantly lower abuse levels. Data analysis shows the following variables as being associated with subjects' academic performance: self-confidence, self-esteem, school and classroom atmosphere and students' socio-economic status.

Key words: child abuse, school abuse, academic performance, self-esteem.