

# **Self-Concept and Violence in the School Context Among Adolescents: The Protective Role of Maternal and Family Relationships and Family Climate**

## **Autoconcepto y Violencia en el Contexto Escolar en Adolescentes: El Papel Protector de las Relaciones Maternas y Familiares y del Clima Familiar**

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**Abstract:** Self-concept, defined as an individual's perception of themselves, plays a fundamental role in the regulation of human behavior. In light of the increasing number of violent incidents reported in school settings in the Region of Murcia, this study aims to analyze the self-concept of adolescents exhibiting maladaptive patterns of social interaction, as well as the influence of the family climate on such behaviors. A retrospective *ex post facto* single-group design was employed, involving a sample of 1,118 students aged between 13 and 16 years (46% male and 54% female). Participants were selected using non-probability (convenience) sampling. The instruments used included the Multidimensional Self-Concept Scale Form 5 (AF-5), the Delinquent and Violent Behavior Scale, and a custom questionnaire assessing structural family characteristics (e.g., parental cohabitation, education level, and employment status). Significant differences in family climate were found between violent and nonviolent adolescents. In terms of self-concept, participants generally reported higher scores in the social and family dimensions, but lower scores in the emotional dimension—consistent with findings from previous studies. These findings offer valuable insights for educational professionals, providing guidance on addressing issues related to school violence and social adjustment. Moreover, they underscore the importance of specific family factors in understanding and preventing maladaptive behaviors, offering parents a framework for intervention. Finally, the results have implications for educational policymakers, suggesting strategies to enhance institutional policies and improve the overall quality of education.

**Keywords:** *Self-Concept, Adolescence, School Violence, School Victimization, Family Climate*

**Resumen:** El autoconcepto, definido como la percepción que una persona tiene de sí misma, desempeña un papel fundamental en la regulación de la conducta humana. Ante el incremento de incidentes violentos registrados en entornos escolares de la Región de Murcia, este estudio tiene como objetivo analizar el autoconcepto de los adolescentes que presentan patrones desadaptativos de interacción social, así como la influencia del clima familiar en dichos comportamientos. Se empleó un diseño retrospectivo *ex post facto* de un solo grupo, con una muestra de 1118 estudiantes de entre 13 y 16 años (46 % hombres y 54 % mujeres). Los participantes fueron seleccionados mediante muestreo no probabilístico por conveniencia. Los instrumentos utilizados incluyeron la Escala Multidimensional de Autoconcepto Forma 5 (AF-5), la

Escala de Conductas Delictivas y Violentas y un cuestionario *ad hoc* para evaluar características estructurales de la familia (por ejemplo, convivencia de los progenitores, nivel educativo y situación laboral). Se encontraron diferencias significativas en el clima familiar entre adolescentes violentos y no violentos. En cuanto al autoconcepto, los participantes informaron, en general, de puntuaciones más altas en las dimensiones social y familiar, y más bajas en la dimensión emocional, en consonancia con los hallazgos de estudios previos. Estos resultados ofrecen aportaciones valiosas para los profesionales de la educación, al proporcionar orientaciones para abordar cuestiones relacionadas con la violencia escolar y la adaptación social. Asimismo, subrayan la importancia de determinados factores familiares en la comprensión y prevención de conductas desadaptativas, ofreciendo a los padres un marco de referencia para la intervención. Finalmente, los hallazgos tienen implicaciones para los responsables de las políticas educativas, al sugerir estrategias destinadas a fortalecer las políticas institucionales y mejorar la calidad global de la educación.

**Palabras clave:** Autoconcepto, Adolescencia, Violencia Escolar, Victimización Escolar, Clima Familiar

## Introduction

Adolescence represents a particularly complex developmental stage, marked by continuous fluctuations in emotions and affective states that are often disorganized and strongly influenced by individual experiences (Silva-Escoria and Mejía-Pérez 2015). As a transitional phase toward adulthood, it is characterized by heightened vulnerability, increasing the likelihood of adolescents being involved in situations of violence or school victimization (Ruiz-Hernández et al. 2021; Umaña-Taylor et al. 2018). The physiological changes inherent to this period, combined with significant social and psychological transformations, contribute to a progressive distancing between adolescents and their parents (Carrascosa et al. 2015). This distancing stems from adolescents' pursuit of greater autonomy and the development of a more critical attitude toward familial authority—factors that significantly influence their psychosocial well-being (Siller et al. 2021). Within this context, the analysis of personal and familial variables, such as self-concept, becomes particularly relevant for understanding adolescents' involvement in violent situations. Research examining the social climate in educational settings has identified a consistent increase in violence, both institutionally and among peers. According to Meskell et al. (2024), classroom violence has risen exponentially, with one in three students reporting having been threatened or assaulted by peers. Other studies (Kethineni et al. 2024; Vara-Horna et al. 2022) have also reported a high prevalence of violent behavior among adolescents. However, discrepancies persist across findings due to divergent conceptualizations of violence and the influence of cultural and contextual factors on sampled populations. The variability in prevalence data reflects the inherent complexity of the term "violence," which is shaped by sociocultural contexts and methodological differences (Cruz-Manrique et al. 2021; Horton et al. 2024; Fischer et al. 2021).

These disparities continue to emerge as new studies are incorporated into the literature (González et al. 2023; Pina, Jiménez-Barbero, et al. 2022). As such, adolescence and the school environment must be recognized as high-risk settings, necessitating immediate and coordinated intervention by the educational community (Pina, López-Nicol, et al. 2022);

Vergunst et al. 2021). Among the most influential factors in adolescent involvement in violent behavior, the family environment and self-concept—understood as a multidimensional construct—have been consistently identified in the literature (Estévez et al. 2018; Castro et al. 2015). Self-concept refers to an individual's perception of themselves, shaped through interpersonal experiences and self-attributions regarding one's behavior (Cuadros and Berger 2023). Adolescence is a pivotal stage for the development and consolidation of self-concept (Choi et al. 2022). While numerous studies have explored the relationship between self-concept and adolescents' psycho-emotional adjustment, findings remain inconclusive. For instance, Livingston et al. (2021) found that a negative self-concept correlates with poor social competencies. In contrast, Walters and Espelage (2023) reported that adolescents who perpetrate violence often score high in the social dimension of self-concept, suggesting that aggression may function as a strategy for social integration and peer validation. Similarly, Cuadros and Berger (2023) noted that among aggressive and socially dominant adolescents, such behaviors may serve as adaptive mechanisms for group inclusion and social survival. Thus, involvement in violent contexts can contribute to perceived respect and admiration among peers. Conversely, victims of violence typically exhibit low self-concept in physical, social, and emotional domains (Penado and Rodicio-García 2017; Sheeran et al. 2025), while often displaying higher self-concept in family and academic dimensions (De la Torre et al. 2008).

The family environment is also a critical determinant of adolescent behavior and personality development. Elements such as communication quality, family relationship dynamics, and conflict-resolution strategies significantly influence adolescent psychosocial outcomes (Climent-Galarza et al. 2022). A hostile or dysfunctional family climate has been associated with the development of a negative self-concept, thereby impairing adolescents' ability to construct a positive self-image (Wang et al. 2020). Furthermore, deficient parental communication, heightened familial conflict, and weakened emotional bonds are strongly linked to an increase in violent behavior among adolescents (Estévez et al. 2018). Given this backdrop, the present study is situated within the broader context of increasing school violence and victimization (Meskell et al. 2024). It explores their intersections with self-concept and family climate. Specifically, the study considers the various roles that adolescents may assume in violent interactions: aggressors, victims, or a combination of both—commonly referred to as “bully-victims” (Lohmeyer and Threadgold 2023). This multifaceted approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of adolescent violence, moving beyond the dominant focus on bullying and cyberbullying, which often exclude other forms of episodic or reactive violence. These forms, despite lacking a prolonged duration or power imbalance, nonetheless have severe implications for adolescents' psychosocial development (Montero-Carretero et al. 2020).

To establish a solid theoretical foundation for the study, two central constructs—violence and self-concept—are examined, both of which are integral to understanding adolescent behavioral dynamics in educational settings. School violence is defined as any intentional behavior—physical, verbal, or psychological—directed at peers with the aim of causing harm, intimidation, or asserting dominance (UNESCO 2020). While classical definitions emphasize repetitive aggression and power imbalances (Olweus 2013), this study adopts a broader and more contemporary definition that also encompasses episodic and reactive forms of violence (Espelage et al. 2022). This broader framework permits the inclusion of adolescents who may alternate between roles of aggressor and victim, thereby acknowledging the fluidity and contextual nature of these roles within school environments (Lohmeyer and Threadgold 2023). Self-concept, meanwhile, is understood as an individual's organized and hierarchical set of self-perceptions and beliefs, encompassing domains such as academic competence, physical appearance, family relationships, emotional regulation, and social functioning (Marsh and Craven 200G; Shavelson et al. 157G). During adolescence, self-concept becomes increasingly salient as individuals actively construct their identity in response to familial, academic, and peer influences (Bleidorn et al. 2022). This study adopts the multidimensional and dynamic framework proposed by Cuadros and Berger (2023), which allows for the contextual analysis of specific self-concept domains and their associations with patterns of violence and victimization. By clearly articulating these two constructs, this study aims to contribute to a more integrative and comprehensive understanding of the personal and interpersonal factors that shape adolescent development and behavior, particularly within educational contexts.

The following objectives and hypotheses were set out: the first objective was to analyze school conflict among secondary school students in the Region of Murcia, determining the proportion of students who present violent behavior, are victims of school violence or manifest both profiles (combined role). In relation to the first hypothesis, the prevalence of students involved in aggression-victimization dynamics was expected to be similar to that identified in previous studies, both for violent students (Robertson et al. 2021) and for victims of violence (Lee et al. 2022) and those with a combined role (Farrell 2024). The second objective focused on the relationship between aggression, victimization, and self-concept. Previous studies have generally pointed to a significant negative relationship between these constructs and have identified high self-concept as a protective factor against violent behavior and school victimization (Jiménez et al. 2015; Lee et al. 2022). In this sense, significant differences are expected to be found in the self-concept dimensions assessed in the sample of students as a function of their social interaction pattern. Furthermore, it is expected that those with a dysfunctional pattern (violent, victimized, or combined role students) will have significantly lower scores on all dimensions of self-concept compared to their nonviolent peers. The third objective was aimed at analyzing the family climate of adolescents involved in situations of violence, taking into account their pattern of social interaction (violent, victim, or combined

role) and establishing differences when comparing them with the normative group. As evidenced by previous studies linking a more conflictual family climate with violent adolescents (Lassri et al. 2023) and with adolescent victims of school violence (Walters and Espelage 2023), variables such as employment status, the cultural level of both parents, family structure, the quality of parental relationships, and the presence of family conflicts are expected to differ according to the behavior pattern of adolescents (violent, victims, or combined role).

## Method

### Participants

The sample consisted of a total of 1,118 upper secondary education students (46% male and 54% female), aged between 13 and 16 years ( $M = 13.71$ ;  $SD = 1.31$ ). A non-probabilistic (convenience) sampling method was employed, whereby the assessment instruments were administered to students from schools that voluntarily agreed to participate. The reference population comprised students in the second cycle of Compulsory Secondary Education (third and fourth year of ESO) in the Region of Murcia during the 2011–2012 academic year.

During this academic year, a total of 57,280 students were enrolled in the third and fourth years of ESO across 233 educational institutions in the region, of which 120 were public schools and 113 were private or state-subsidized. Of the total enrollment, 20,828 students attended public schools, while 8,500 were enrolled in private or subsidized institutions.

The decision to focus on students in the third and fourth years of Compulsory Secondary Education was based on prior literature indicating that these educational stages carry a greater risk of involvement in violent classroom situations (Cangas et al. 2007; Díaz-Aguado et al. 2004). Additionally, the participating schools were generally more accessible than institutions offering lower or upper secondary education (Bachillerato).

Once the participating schools were identified, an average of four classrooms per school was randomly selected for inclusion in the study. The final sample size was 1,118 students, aged between 13 and 18 years, of whom 207 were from private schools. The sample size was determined using a statistical formula designed to estimate a representative proportion of the total number of students enrolled in secondary education in the Region of Murcia ( $N = 320,000$ ). The formula was applied with a confidence level of 55% and a maximum margin of error of 5%, rendering the selected sample statistically adequate and representative for the purposes of the study.

### Instruments

To assess the frequency of students' involvement in violent behavior within the classroom over the past twelve months, the Delinquent and Violent Behavior in the Classroom Scale (Rubini and Pombeni 1992), adapted into Spanish by GRUPO LISIS, was employed. This instrument

comprises nineteen items designed to evaluate both aggressive behavior (e.g., “I have painted or damaged the walls of the school or institute”) and victimization experiences (e.g., “I was made fun of in class or insulted by a classmate”). Responses are recorded using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The scale demonstrated adequate internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of 0.84 for the aggression subscale and 0.82 for the victimization subscale—values consistent with those reported by Herrero et al. (200G).

Self-concept was measured using the Multidimensional Self-Concept Scale Form 5 (AF-5), based on the theoretical model proposed by Cuadros and Berger (2023), which conceptualizes self-concept as a hierarchically organized and multidimensional construct (Rivas-Drake et al. 2020). The questionnaire assesses five distinct domains: academic, social, emotional, family, and physical self-concept, through a total of thirty items. Participants rate their agreement using a response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 55 (strongly agree). The scale has demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha values ranging from 0.71 to 0.84 across the five dimensions (Tomé-Fernández et al. 2015).

Family structure and family climate were evaluated through a custom survey in which students reported parental educational attainment, employment status, and family structure (i.e., whether parents live together or are separated/divorced). Additionally, students’ perceptions of the quality of their relationship with their parents were assessed using a five-item scale. This instrument includes questions addressing conflict frequency with both parents, rated on a three-point scale (no, sometimes, often), and an item evaluating the overall quality of the parent-child relationship, rated on a five-point scale (very good, good, fair, bad, and very bad). This is an ad hoc questionnaire developed by the research team, intended to support the initial stages of investigation and to serve as a foundation for the future development of more robust and psychometrically validated instruments.

## Instrument Adaptation and Conceptual Clarification for Participants

To ensure the methodological rigor of the study and to enhance participants’ understanding, all instruments underwent a process of cultural adaptation and conceptual clarification, tailored specifically to the adolescent population of the Region of Murcia (Spain). In particular, the Delinquent and Violent Behavior in the Classroom Scale (Rubini and Pombeni 1552), originally developed in Italy, had already been adapted and validated for Spanish-speaking populations by GRUPO LISIS, demonstrating robust reliability indices (Herrero et al. 200G). Similarly, the AF-5 Self-Concept Scale was administered in its standardized Spanish version, which incorporates linguistic and cultural nuances appropriate to Spanish adolescents (Tomé-Fernández et al. 2015). To further reinforce cultural validity, a panel of local educational professionals reviewed all survey items to assess their clarity and contextual relevance. Minor modifications were made to the wording and examples to better reflect typical school situations experienced by students in the region, while ensuring that the underlying constructs remained

unchanged. Moreover, given the conceptual complexity and potential ambiguity associated with the notion of violence, particular attention was given to ensuring that participants clearly understood how the term was defined within the context of the study. Prior to administering the violence-related instrument, students were provided with a brief explanatory note defining violence as: "any physical, verbal, or psychological behavior intended to harm, intimidate, or exclude another student within the school environment." To support comprehension, the definition was accompanied by specific examples—such as "mocking a classmate," "pushing someone in the hallway," or "intentionally excluding a peer from group activities." This approach was designed to minimize misinterpretation and promote response consistency, particularly in distinguishing between different forms of violent behavior, including both reactive and proactive aggression.

### Procedure

To conduct the present research study, the principals of the participating educational institutions were contacted to inform them of the study's objectives and to obtain their authorization for institutional participation. Given that the sample included minors, informed consent was also obtained from parents or legal guardians, with an emphasis on the voluntary nature of participation and the confidentiality of the data collected.

Once the necessary authorizations were secured from both the schools and the families, the assessment instruments were administered collectively in the classroom setting. This process took place in the presence of teaching staff and was conducted during regular school hours. Each session lasted approximately fifteen to twenty minutes, and the assessments were typically completed in a single session per group, with an overall duration of around one hour.

Throughout the entire research procedure, the study adhered strictly to the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki (1975) and its subsequent revisions, particularly the 2013 update in Brazil. Additionally, the study followed the protocol approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Granada (reference code: 4018/CEIH/2024).

### Data Analysis

To identify students with high levels of violent behavior and school victimization, the following classification criteria were applied: (a) Students were categorized as exhibiting violent behavior if they scored 28.54 or higher on the Violent Behavior Scale and below 1G.15 on the Victimization Scale. These thresholds correspond to one standard deviation above the mean for violent behavior and victimization, respectively ( $M = 15.72$ ;  $SD = 8.52$ ;  $SE = 0.24$ ). (b) Students were classified as victims if they scored 1G.15 or higher on the Victimization Scale and below 28.54 on the Violent Behavior Scale. These cut-off points represent one standard deviation above the mean for victimization and violent behavior, respectively ( $M = 11.17$ ;  $SD = 5.15$ ;  $t = 5.15$ ;  $SE = 0.24$ ;  $T.S. = 0.15$ ).

Based on these criteria, the sample was divided into three distinct groups:

- Violent students (meeting criteria for violent behavior only).
- Victimized students (meeting criteria for victimization only).
- Combined-role students (meeting criteria for both violent behavior and victimization).

Students classified in the combined-role group were excluded from the first two categories to ensure mutually exclusive groupings. For each group, the distribution was analyzed in relation to various socio-family variables, including parental educational level, family structure, employment status, quality of parental relationships, and the presence of family conflicts. Differences between these variables and those observed in the normative group were assessed using the Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test, and contingency tables were constructed to organize the data and explore associations among the qualitative variables under investigation.

With respect to self-concept, mean scores for each of the five self-concept dimensions were analyzed according to students' roles in violent situations. To examine differences, a *t*-test for independent samples was conducted, enabling the comparison of two independent groups on continuous variables. Initially, comparisons were made between each target group (violent, victimized, and combined-role students) and the normative group. Subsequently, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to assess differences across all categories.

## Results

### Social Climate in the School Environment

Of the total sample, 5.3% of students were identified as exhibiting violent behavior, while 11.6% were classified as victims of peer victimization. Additionally, 4.6% of the participants demonstrated a combined role, scoring high on both the violent behavior and school victimization scales.

### Structure and Social Climate in the Family Environment

#### *Parental Education*

Among students identified as exhibiting violent behavior, 58.1% reported that their parents had only a basic level of education (i.e., no formal education or completion of only primary education). However, no statistically significant association was found when compared to the normative group (mother's education:  $\chi^2 = 1.674$ ,  $p = .433$ ; father's education:  $\chi^2 = .153$ ,  $p = .526$ ). Similar patterns were observed among students classified as victims and those in the combined-role group, whose parents also tended to have lower educational backgrounds. Nonetheless, no significant associations emerged between parental educational level and

victimization (mother's education:  $\chi^2 = 4.683, p = .05$ ; father's education:  $\chi^2 = .804, p = .65$ ) or between parental education and combined-role behaviors (mother's education:  $\chi^2 = .773, p = .475$ ; father's education:  $\chi^2 = 1.15, p = .5$ ).

### *Employment Status of Parents*

The majority of parents of students involved in school violence were reported to be employed. However, Chi-square analyses revealed no statistically significant differences between parental employment status and students' involvement in violent situations when compared to the normative group. This lack of significance was consistent across all subgroups:

- For students identified as violent:
  - Father's employment status:  $\chi^2 = 1.15, p = .204$
  - Mother's employment status:  $\chi^2 = 3.035, p = .081$
- For students classified as victims:
  - Father's employment status:  $\chi^2 = .58, p = .417$
  - Mother's employment status:  $\chi^2 = .21, p = .073$
- For combined-role students:
  - Father's employment status:  $\chi^2 = .00, p = .587$
  - Mother's employment status:  $\chi^2 = .65, p = .415$

These findings suggest that parental employment status is not significantly associated with adolescents' involvement in violent behavior, victimization, or combined roles in school settings.

### *Family Structure*

The majority of students reported living in a family structure where both parents reside together. However, analysis using the Chi-square statistic revealed no significant association between family structure and students' involvement in violent behavior, victimization, or combined roles. More specifically:

1. For violent students:  $\chi^2 = 2.2, p = .132$
2. For victimized students:  $\chi^2 = 1.15, p = .274$
3. For combined-role students:  $\chi^2 = 1.718, p = .150$

These findings suggest that family structure, defined by parental cohabitation, is not a significant predictor of students' involvement in school violence or victimization dynamics.

### *Quality of Relationships with Both Parents*

As shown in Table 1, statistically significant differences were found between violent behavior and students' perceptions of their relationship with their mother ( $\chi^2 = 8.484, p = .004$ ). Students identified as violent were more likely to report a poorer relationship with their mother compared to their peers in the normative group. For students classified as victims of violence, significant differences were observed in their perceived relationships with both parents:

- Father:  $\chi^2 = 8.733, p = .003$
- Mother:  $\chi^2 = 8.484, p = .004$

These students reported lower-quality relationships with both their mother and father relative to the normative group. Similarly, students in the combined-role group also perceived more dysfunctional relationships with both parents, with statistically significant differences found for:

- Father:  $\chi^2 = 8.52G, p = .003$
- Mother:  $\chi^2 = 32.313, p < .001$

These findings indicate that a poorer perceived parent-child relationship, particularly with both parental figures, is more prevalent among students involved in violent dynamics—whether as aggressors, victims, or both.

Table 1: Differences According to the Relationship with Parents

<i>Violent Group (9.3%)</i>		<i>Normative Group (90.7%)</i>	
Father Relationship		Father Relationship	
Very good/good	Regular/bad/very bad	Very good/good	Regular/bad/very bad
77.55	22.45	84.17	15.83
Mother Relationship		Mother Relationship	
84.G5	15.31	52.58	7.02
<i>Victim Group (11.6%)</i>		<i>Normative Group (90.7%)</i>	
Father Relationship		Father Relationship	
Very good/good	Regular/bad/very bad	Very good/good	Regular/bad/very bad
73.G	2G.4	84.17	15.83
Mother Relationship		Mother Relationship	
8G.4	13.G	52.58	7.02
<i>Victim-Violent Group (4.6%)</i>		<i>Normative Group (95.4%)</i>	
Father Relationship		Father Relationship	
Very good/good	Regular/bad/very bad	Very good/good	Regular/bad/very bad
G7.35	30.43	84.17	15.83
Mother Relationship		Mother Relationship	
G5.57	30.43	52.58	7.02

### *Conflicts with Parents*

The analysis of family conflict revealed statistically significant differences between groups, indicating that students involved in violent situations are more likely to report experiencing conflict within the family environment. As shown in Table 2, both students identified as exhibiting violent behavior ( $\chi^2 = 4.548, p = .033$ ) and those classified as victims of peer aggression ( $\chi^2 = 8.510, p = .004$ ) reported a higher perception of family conflict compared to the normative group. In contrast, no statistically significant differences were found for students in the combined-role group, suggesting that their experience of family conflict does not differ notably from that of their peers outside the violence-related categories.

Table 2: Differences According to the Existence of Conflicts with Parents

<i>Violent Group (9.3%)</i>		<i>Normative Group (90.0%)</i>	
Parental Conflict		Parental Conflict	
No	Sometimes/Often	No	Sometimes/Often
37.75	G2.24	45.0G	50.54
<i>Victim Group (11.6%)</i>		<i>Normative Group (88.4%)</i>	
Parental Conflict		Parental Conflict	
No	Sometimes/Often	No	Sometimes/Often
35.2	G4.8	45.0G	50.54
<i>Victim-Violent Group (4.6%)</i>		<i>Normative Group (95.4%)</i>	
Parental Conflict		Parental Conflict	
No	Sometimes/Often	No	Sometimes/Often
36.96	G3.04	G	50.54

### *Self-Concept*

Given that the scores are presented on a 0 to 10 scale, it is noteworthy that the mean scores across all self-concept dimensions exceed the midpoint of the scale in all groups—violent, victimized, combined-role, and normative. As shown in Table 3, it is particularly notable that, across all groups, the highest self-concept scores were observed in the family and social dimensions. In contrast, the emotional dimension consistently received the lowest mean scores, regardless of group classification.

Table 3: Mean Scores and Differences in Self-Concept

<i>Self-Concept</i>	<i>Violent Group</i>		<i>Normative</i>			
	<i>M</i>	<i>DT</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>DT</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Academic</i>	G.20	2.142	G.35	2.075	-.8G5	.387
<i>Social</i>	7.27	1.807	7.45	1.553	-1.0G2	.288
<i>Emotional</i>	5.75	1.832	5.53	1.5G3	-.883	.378

<i>Family</i>	7.75	2.011	7.58	1.877	-1.155	.232
<i>Physical</i>	G.25	2.217	G.28	2.0G7	-.105	.513
	<i>Victim Group</i>		<i>Normative</i>			
<i>Self-Concept</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>DT</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>DT</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Academic</i>	G.23	1.510	G.35	2.075	.811	.418
<i>Social</i>	7.15	1.734	7.45	1.553	-1.554	.051
<i>Emotional</i>	5.58	2.1G8	5.53	1.5G3	-1.8G7	.0G2
<i>Family</i>	7.88	1.855	7.58	1.877	-.582	.0G2
<i>Physical</i>	G.45	2.158	G.28	2.0G7	.858	.351
	<i>Victim-Violent Group</i>		<i>Normative</i>			
<i>Self-Concept</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>DT</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>DT</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Academic</i>	G.21	2.155	G.35	2.075	.545	.583
<i>Social</i>	7.40	1.817	7.45	1.553	-.224	.823
<i>Emotional</i>	5.45	1.543	5.53	1.5G3	-1.484	.138
<i>Family</i>	7.75	2.200	7.58	1.877	-.825	.408
<i>Physical</i>	5.54	2.110	G.28	2.0G7	-1.075	.283

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) did not show statistically significant differences between the different groups linked to school coexistence (violent, victims, violent-victims, and normative group) in any of the self-concept dimensions: academic, social, emotional, family, or physical (Table 4).

Table 4: Differences in Self-Concept Dimensions by School Coexistence Group

<i>Self-Concept</i>	<i>Groups</i>					
	<i>Violent</i>	<i>Victim</i>	<i>Victim-Violent</i>	<i>Normative</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>Academic</i>	G.20	G.23	G.21	G.35	.453	.G87
<i>Social</i>	7.27	7.15	7.40	7.45	1.478	.215
<i>Emotional</i>	5.75	5.58	5.45	5.53	1.855	.128
<i>Family</i>	7.75	7.88	7.75	7.58	.713	.544
<i>Physical</i>	G.25	G.45	5.54	G.28	.G74	.5G8

These findings indicate that, overall, students demonstrate moderate to high levels of self-concept across the various dimensions assessed, regardless of their involvement in violent behavior and/or school victimization.

Notably, the family and social self-concept dimensions yielded the highest scores across all groups. This suggests that students, irrespective of their behavioral classification—whether violent, victimized, victim-aggressor, or not involved—tend to perceive both their family environment and social relationships in a positive light.

## Discussion

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research (Choi et al. 2022; Walters and Espelage 2023) on involvement in violent behavior within the school context. A high prevalence of peer victimization was observed, along with a notable tendency among students to resort to violence as a form of self-defense (Invernón-Gómez et al. 2024). Specifically, 25.5% of the students in the sample were involved in school violence—as aggressors, victims, or in a combined role.

As noted by Fischer et al. (2021), although there is growing attention to the experiences of victimized students, much of the existing literature remains focused on victimization within the bullying framework, often overlooking other forms of aggression (Angulo et al. 2017). These results underscore the importance of expanding the scope of research to encompass broader manifestations of school violence, beyond traditional bullying dynamics.

These findings are consistent with previous research conducted among comparable adolescent populations in Spain and other European countries. For example, De la Torre et al. (2008), in a study involving Spanish secondary school students, found that involvement in violent behavior was associated with lower emotional self-concept, a pattern that is similarly reflected in the present results. Likewise, Estévez et al. (2018) reported that adolescents exhibiting aggressive behaviors tended to experience higher levels of family conflict and a deteriorated emotional climate at home, which aligns with our findings regarding the increased perception of parental conflict among both violent and victimized students.

However, our study did not identify statistically significant differences in the academic, physical, or family self-concept domains across the different groups. This contrasts with findings from Jiménez et al. (2015) and Castro et al. (2015), who observed that adolescents with more severe behavioral problems exhibited lower academic and family self-concept. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that our sample included a broader range of violent behaviors, not limited to chronic or severe aggression, potentially attenuating the relationship between these variables. Furthermore, participants in our study generally reported moderate to high levels of self-concept across most dimensions, which may reflect a culturally influenced bias toward positive self-reporting in school-based surveys, as discussed by Pérez-Sánchez et al. (2024). Notably, our data revealed that adolescents occupying a combined aggressor–victim role reported relatively high levels of social self-concept, a finding consistent with Cuadros and Berger (2023), who highlighted that some aggressive adolescents may perceive themselves as socially competent, due to the status or dominance they gain through violent behavior. This pattern is also supported by Freeman et al. (2024), who suggest that group-based aggression can serve as a mechanism for social cohesion within peer networks.

Additionally, although our results showed no significant effect of parental education or employment status on involvement in violent behavior, these variables have been identified as relevant in other studies. For instance, Lassri et al. (2023) reported that low parental

education was associated with reduced self-concept clarity and greater emotional instability. The absence of such associations in our data may be attributed to the relative socioeconomic homogeneity of the sample, which may limit variability and obscure potential effects. Overall, the findings of this study are consistent with a growing body of international literature that conceptualizes school violence as a multifactorial phenomenon, in which emotional vulnerability and family dynamics play a central role. These results underscore the importance of prioritizing emotional education and family-based interventions as essential components of school violence prevention strategies. Building on these comparative insights, our findings also open avenues for further exploration of victim typologies and their relationship to psychosocial adjustment during adolescence.

In terms of victim typology, the results indicate that submissive victims are more prevalent than aggressive victims. However, it is important to highlight that students in the combined-role group represent a higher risk for emotional and psychosocial maladjustment (Siller et al. 2021). The aggressive victim, characterized by traits of both perpetrator and victim, tends to exhibit greater emotional instability and a pronounced deficit in social and interpersonal skills (Cuadros and Berger 2023).

With regard to the second hypothesis, which posited differences in self-concept dimensions between students with violent and nonviolent behavior patterns, the analysis did not reveal statistically significant differences. However, there was a consistent trend toward lower scores in the emotional self-concept dimension across all groups, suggesting that emotional difficulties are a widespread issue among adolescents (Farrell 2024). Since this diminished emotional self-perception is not exclusive to victimized students, it is recommended that school-based programs prioritize the development of emotional self-concept as a key component of violence prevention strategies.

Interestingly, students in the combined-role group obtained high scores in the social self-concept dimension, consistent with previous findings suggesting that aggressive adolescents may perceive themselves as socially competent (Freeman et al. 2024). This phenomenon may be linked to the need for peer recognition and group acceptance, where violent behavior is interpreted as a strategy to gain social status and popularity. Furthermore, the positive family perceptions reported by these students may reflect a permissive parenting style, which, according to Robertson et al. (2021), may contribute to the development of maladaptive behaviors. This finding introduces a meaningful nuance in the study of self-concept that warrants further investigation. Several authors (Omidbakhsh et al. 2025; Sáez et al. 2021) have emphasized that emotional self-concept—understood as an individual's perception of their ability to understand, regulate, and express their emotions—is particularly susceptible to disruption in contexts of interpersonal conflict, such as those commonly found in school violence situations (Graves et al. 2023). In such environments, students—regardless of their role as victim, aggressor, or both—may experience intense negative emotions (e.g., fear, guilt,

shame, or anger) while lacking the emotional resources necessary to process and manage them effectively. This deficit can significantly undermine their sense of emotional competence.

Furthermore, existing research (Cuadros and Berger 2023; Kornienko et al. 2020) suggests that many school environments prioritize academic performance and observable behavior over emotional development. This institutional emphasis may help explain why adolescents often report lower emotional self-concept, particularly during a developmental period characterized by increased emotional sensitivity and the active formation of identity.

Thus, low scores in the emotional self-concept dimension may not only indicate individual psychological difficulties but also reflect structural limitations within educational systems, which may fail to provide sufficient opportunities for students to develop emotional competencies. These findings underscore the urgent need to implement psychoeducational interventions aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence and regulation skills within the school context.

The seemingly paradoxical association between violent behavior and high social self-concept may be better understood through the lens of Social Dominance Theory (Sidanius and Pratto 1555), which posits that individuals engage in dominance-oriented behaviors, including aggression, to establish or maintain hierarchical status within social groups. In adolescent peer settings, such behaviors can be rewarded with popularity, influence, or perceived leadership. Consequently, a high social self-concept in violent adolescents may reflect a self-perception of being socially powerful or respected, even if that influence is maintained through fear, intimidation, or coercion.

These insights are echoed in Hawley's (2003) Resource Control Theory, which suggests that some youth employ a combination of prosocial and coercive strategies to maintain social control and peer dominance. In this context, elevated social self-concept among aggressive adolescents may represent not genuine social integration but rather a strategic perception of status within competitive peer dynamics.

Regarding the family context, adolescents identified as violent reported a poorer relationship with their mother and more frequent conflicts with both parents compared to the normative group. These findings are in line with those of Ying et al. (2023), who suggest that, although such characteristics may not strictly align with an authoritarian or neglectful parenting style, they deviate significantly from the democratic style—the parenting approach most consistently associated with positive psychological and behavioral adjustment in adolescence (Sheeran et al. 2025). Both neglectful and authoritarian parenting styles have been linked to lower social competence and increased behavioral problems during adolescence (Freeman et al. 2024). Moreover, ineffective or conflictual parent-child communication may exacerbate adolescents' vulnerability to school violence, as suggested by Meza et al. (2021).

Adolescents in the combined-role group also reported a high-conflict family environment, aligning with prior research indicating that the absence of constructive

conflict-resolution strategies within the home may contribute to greater involvement in school-related conflicts (Penado Abilleira and Rodicio-García 2017). In this regard, low family cohesion and a lack of perceived parental support may hinder these adolescents' ability to establish healthy peer relationships, thereby increasing their risk of involvement in violent situations (Tomé-Fernández et al. 2015).

## **Conclusions and Transfer of Results**

This study aimed to examine the role of self-concept and family climate in adolescents' involvement in school violence, whether as aggressors, victims, or in a combined role. In this regard, the study's objectives were achieved, as it was possible to identify the prevalence of various violence-related profiles and to analyze the relationships between these roles, self-concept dimensions, and family dynamics.

Regarding the first objective, the study determined that 25.5% of students were involved in some form of school violence, confirming both the high prevalence and complexity of the phenomenon among adolescents. With respect to the second objective, although statistically significant differences were not found between groups across the self-concept dimensions, a consistent trend toward lower scores in emotional self-concept was observed across all groups. This pattern suggests a shared area of emotional vulnerability and underscores the importance of integrating emotional self-concept development into school-based prevention programs. In relation to the third objective, findings revealed that adolescents involved in violent dynamics—particularly those in the combined-role group—reported higher levels of family conflict and poorer relationships with their parents. These results reinforce the idea that family relationships and communication patterns are critical in understanding and addressing school violence.

Based on these findings, we recommend that future research adopt longitudinal designs to explore the developmental trajectory of self-concept and its influence on violent behavior over time. In addition, intervention programs should be designed to include both adolescents and their families, with a focus on enhancing emotional competence and promoting constructive conflict-resolution strategies. These findings also carry important practical implications for educational settings. They highlight the need to address conflict within schools by explicitly incorporating self-concept development into the curriculum, thereby addressing both current conflicts and supporting their prevention.

Moreover, the results emphasize the necessity of placing greater focus on collaborative work with families. This involves implementing coordinated strategies that actively engage families, fostering coherence between school and home environments. Establishing effective channels of communication and promoting partnership within the educational community are essential to mitigating the effects of school violence and fostering a supportive learning context. Finally, these results should be taken into account by educational policymakers when designing and implementing school coexistence strategies. Emphasis should be placed on

emotional support and family involvement as key components of effective, evidence-based violence prevention policies.

## **Limitations and Future Lines of Research**

This study presents several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the use of convenience sampling limits the generalizability of the results to broader populations. The nonrandom selection of participants may introduce sampling bias, thereby affecting the external validity of the study. Future research would benefit from utilizing nationally representative or European-level samples to enhance the generalizability and applicability of the findings.

Second, the cross-sectional design employed precludes the establishment of causal relationships among the variables under investigation. While the results indicate associations between involvement in violent behavior, self-concept, and family climate, the directionality of these relationships cannot be determined. Longitudinal designs are needed to provide more robust insights into the temporal evolution of these phenomena and their influence on adolescents' psychosocial development.

Moreover, the study relied exclusively on self-report measures, which may be susceptible to social desirability bias and perceptual inaccuracies. Future research could address this limitation through mixed-methods approaches, incorporating qualitative techniques such as interviews or focus groups, and triangulating data with teacher and parent reports, as well as direct observation.

In relation to the measurement of self-concept, the present study employed a tool assessing five broad dimensions. While informative, the use of more comprehensive instruments—such as the Self-Description Questionnaire II (SDQ-II)—could yield a more nuanced understanding of self-concept by disaggregating it into specific subdomains, including physical competence, interpersonal relationships, and emotional stability (Pérez-Sánchez et al. 2024). The implementation of such tools would offer deeper insight into how various forms of school violence impact adolescents' self-perception.

Another important limitation is the lack of differentiation between types of school violence, such as chronic bullying versus isolated acts of aggression. Future studies should aim to explore the dynamics of victimization and aggression in greater detail, taking into account the frequency, intensity, and power imbalances characterizing these interactions.

Additionally, although the study underscores the importance of family climate in adolescents' involvement in school violence, it does not thoroughly examine specific household variables, such as family structure, socioeconomic status, or exposure to adverse family events. Further research should explore these factors in depth, alongside the effectiveness of intervention programs targeting both adolescents and their families, with the goal of strengthening interpersonal relationships and reducing school violence.

In conclusion, there is a pressing need to expand this area of research through the adoption of more rigorous study designs, multi-method approaches, and representative sampling strategies. Such methodological improvements will deepen our understanding of the complex interplay between school violence, self-concept, and family context, and ultimately contribute to the development of more targeted and effective prevention and intervention strategies tailored to the needs of adolescent populations.

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## **Informed Consent**

This study was conducted with the informed consent of all participants. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Written consent was obtained from all participants.

## **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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