

## “Bullying y Resiliencia en Adolescentes Peruanos: Rol Mediador de la Autoestima”

“Bullying and Resilience in Peruvian Teens: The Mediate Role of Self-Esteem”

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### Resumen

El objetivo principal de este artículo es conocer y discutir el papel mediador de la autoestima entre la intimidación y la resiliencia en adolescentes peruanos. Una muestra de 490 estudiantes de secundaria de 12 a 18 años participó en el estudio ( $ME = 14.66$ ,  $DS = 1.29$ ). Se obtuvo evidencia de confiabilidad de los instrumentos a través del coeficiente alfa y omega con valores aceptables y la validez basada en la estructura interna del constructo a través del análisis factorial confirmatorio mostró índices de ajuste adecuados. La autoestima (EA) se evaluó con la Escala de Autoestima de Rosenberg, la Resiliencia (ER) con la Escala de Resiliencia Wagnild & Young, y el Acoso (AC) con la Prueba de Intimidación Escolar Cisneros de Autoevaluación. La estimación del efecto mediador de la autoestima entre el bullying y la resiliencia representó el 77.4%. El efecto directo del Bullying sobre la resiliencia no fue estadísticamente significativo ( $p = .818$ , 22.6%). Las estimaciones del papel mediador de la autoestima muestran la incidencia principal en la variable de resiliencia. En conclusión, en la muestra del estudio se evidencia una fuerza predominante de explicación de la autoestima como variable mediadora.

**Palabras clave:** adolescentes, autoestima, bullying, mediación, resiliencia

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## Abstract

The main objective in this article is to know and discuss the mediating role of self-esteem between bullying and resilience in peruvian adolescents. A sample of 490 high school students from ages 12 to 18 participated in the study ( $ME = 14.66$ ,  $DS = 1.29$ ). Evidence of reliability of the instruments was obtained through the alpha and omega coefficient with acceptable values and the validity based on the internal structure of the construct through confirmatory factor analysis showed adequate adjustment indexes. Self-esteem (EA) was evaluated with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Resilience (ER) with the Wagnild & Young Resilience Scale and the Bullying (AC) with the Self-Test Cisneros School Bullying Test. The estimation of the mediating effect of self-esteem between bullying and resilience represented 77.4%. The direct effect of Bullying on resilience was statistically not significant ( $p = .818$ , 22.6%). Estimates of the mediating role of self-esteem show the main incidence on the resilience variable. In conclusion, there is evidence of a predominant force of explanation of self-esteem as a mediating variable

**Keywords:** adolescents, bullying, mediation, resilience, self-esteem.

Bullying is a global problem that can be observed in any school and is not limited only to private, public, primary or secondary, rural or urban schools. The issue has acquired universal characteristics when use or abuse the internet and its different types of social networks; therefore, it is a negative and harmful behavior that occurs in typically psychosocial contexts Migliaccio & Raskaukas (2015). This behavior is defined as any aggressive behavior exercised on another individual or group of young people without any biological tie, which involves an asymmetry of power and the probability of being constant (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014), usually generates fear, school absenteeism, decrease in academic performance, suicide, attempted suicide and alterations in the structure and dynamics of personality (Brito & Oliveira, 2013). The most affected are students aged 12 to 18 years (U. S, Department of Education, 2015).

School bullying is a specific type of aggression in which certain students frequently, permanently and in the long term assault their peers. This aggressive behavior is intentional about one of his peers who cannot defend himself; therefore, occurs in a context of power imbalance between the two.

This phenomenon is generated by diverse factors, the most outstanding being the school environment, the family and the sociocultural aspects. Smith & Brain, 2000, in Zych, Farrington, Llorent & Ttofi (2017, p.15). The literature has defined different forms of Bullying in which the most frequent aggressive behaviors are verbal and with which one wishes to express force and intention to harm (Migliaccio, & Raskaukas, 2015, p. 24).

Current research focused on the functioning of this problem describes bullying as the dynamic process that takes place between the victim and the perpetrator (Rose, Simpson & Moss, 2015), highlighting the role of the individual in time and context, and in the role that he/she can exercise, being able to become victim-stalker (Gumpel, 2008, Gumpel, Zioni, Koren, & Bekerman, 2014, Thornberg, 2007). This condition will depend on the risk and protection factors provided by the parents, who have a great influence on the formation and targeting of the child's profile (Zhou et al., 2013). The characteristics of the individual and the context could play a mediating role in bullying behavior.

Due to the implications and impact of this behavior, it is important to understand the variables that condition or mediate adolescent behavior and bullying. One of the variables that has demonstrated its mediating role, in turn, protective, is the self-esteem that plays an important role in the social performance of the adolescent (Tsaousis, 2016). Self-esteem plays a fundamental role in confronting aggressive behaviors, since it can reinforce key skills and competencies for coping with this or another similar problem (Tsaousis, 2016). There are studies that highlight an indirect relationship between bullying and low levels of self-esteem (e.g., Rose, Slaten & Preast, 2017).

According to the socio-ecological model, self-esteem as an individual factor is influenced by positive social and environmental constructs, generating in them constant changes according to time and context (Hong & Espelage, 2012; Choi & Park, 2018). It is important to highlight that the self-acceptance and self-value that the student is building during his adolescence are related to another component that provides self-control and the necessary skills to handle aversive events: resilience.

This variable has been defined as the process to face conflicting life events, disturbing and challenging, providing the individual with protection skills (Richardson, Neiger, Jensen & Kumpfer, 1990), and Masten (1994) defined resilience as "the interaction between certain characteristics of the individual and the context in which it is a part, the balance between levels of stress and coping strategies, an important development process for future transitions of life "(p 32).

In some contexts, resilience acts as a protective factor in victims of bullying. Individuals who develop such capacity show a persistent, independent personality, of clear aspirations within their lives and with an ability to adapt constantly to any adversity (Wagnild y Young,1993). This author describes resilient people encompassed in 5 fundamental, persistent, independent traits, clear vision of life, ability to adapt and positive attitude in the face of adversity. Therefore, resilience works as a protective factor in those students who are victims of bullying. Although it is true that this variable plays a protective role, very little has been studied with self-esteem and in relation to aggressive external social behavior such as bullying.

González Arratia, Domínguez Espinosa and Valdez Medina (2017) studied the mediating role of self-esteem between negative and positive affect and resilience. By testing a trajectory model through structural equations with the maximum likelihood method, they found moderate relationships between the variables and a significant direct effect between positive affect and resilience, but not for negative affect and an indirect effect. Rodney, Royse, Benitez and Pekmezi (2014) studied the mediating effect of self-efficacy, self-esteem and affect between physical activity and quality of life. In this research it was shown that self-esteem has a significant relationship between physical activity and quality of life, confirming its mediating effect between different variables of the improvement of quality of life and human development.

Sapouna and Wolke (2013), studied the psychological functioning of those students victims of bullying. They study took factors such as: gender, self-esteem, parental relationships, fraternal conflicts, social circle and intimidation indexes, obtaining in males a greater number of victims due to school bullying, but with average and high self-esteem levels compared to women, who reported greater self-esteem and healthy relationships.

Self-esteem studies related to their role as mediators between resilience and bullying are very few and their role is still unclear. The hypotheses range from a real mediating role with inverse effects, so adequate levels of self-esteem and resilience would make school bullying decrease significantly (see proposal of the mediating model, figure 1).

This finding would support many preventive-formative actions in adolescents. Another relevant aspect of the present investigation is the convincing evidence of the psychometric goodness of the research instruments used, based on the evidence of the internal structure of the construct through structural equation procedures.

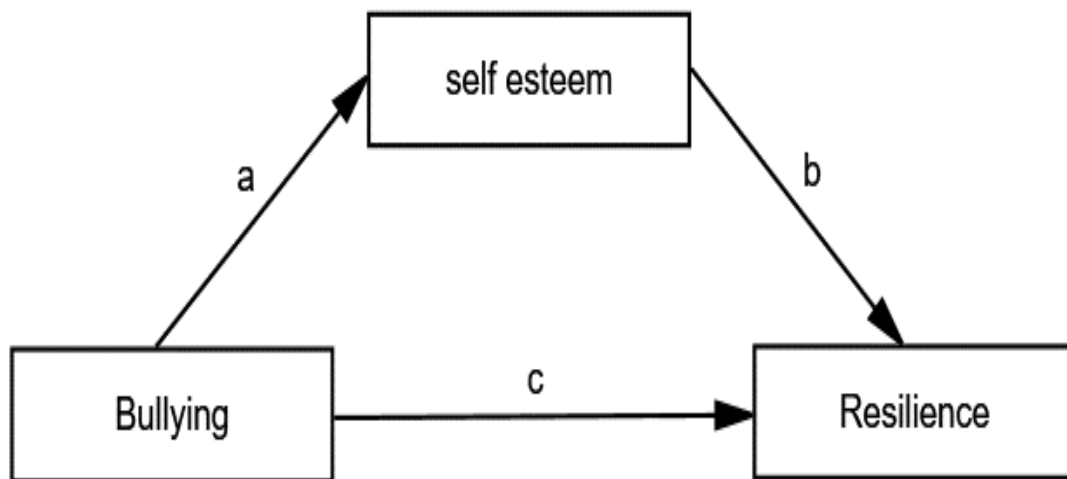


Figura 1. Proposal for a mediating model

## Method

### Participants

A total of 490 students participated in the study, of which 244 (49%) were female and 246 (51%) male, from state educational institutions aged 12 to 18 years (ME = 14.66, SD = 1.29). No significant differences were found when considering the analysis according to sex ( $z = -.575, p = .565$ ).

## **Instruments**

The autotest Spanish adaptation of Piñuel and Oñate (2005) was used, composed of 50 items, it provides a global harassment index (between 50 and 150 points), with a response range of 1 - Never, 2 - Few times, 3 - Many times. Comprised of 8 dimensions, the scores are attributed directly according to the dimension to be evaluated. In order to obtain an adequate model, 13 items were withdrawn.

Scale of Global Self-esteem - RSS - de Rosenberg (1989). The Spanish adaptation of Baños y Guillén (2000) was used. Composed of 10 items, it provides a general index of self-esteem, with a response range of A - Strongly agree, B - Agree, C - Disagree, D - Strongly disagree.

Scoring from 4 to 1 in the first 5 items (1 to 5) and an inverse score from 1 to 4 in the following 5 items (6 to 10). Two items were withdrawn, for the improvement of adjustment indices. Self-esteem is made up of 3 levels.

Resilience Scale (R.S.) of Wagnild and Young (1993). The Spanish adaptation of Rúa y Andreu (2011) was used. Composed of 25 items, it provides a general index of resilience, with a response range of 1 to 3 - Disagree; 4, 5 to 7 - Okay. Consisting of 5 dimensions, the resilience levels are 3, including high, medium and low. In order to obtain optimal results, 5 items were withdrawn.

## **Procedure**

We verified the existence of extreme scores through asymmetry and kurtosis in the range  $[-2, 2]$  (Muthén & Kaplan, 1985; Bandalos & Finney, 2010), conveniently with matrixes polychoric (polytomic items in Resilience) or Tetracoustic, (in case of dichotomous items in Bullying and Self-esteem) (Brown, 2006, Bandalos & Finney, 2010, Ferrando and Anguiano-Carrasco, 2010). With respect to the multivariate normality assumptions, it was evaluated with the Mardia coefficient ( $G^2$ ) expecting magnitudes  $<70$  (Rodríguez, & Ruiz, 2008).

In order to obtain the validity based on the internal structure of the constructs, the confirmatory factorial analysis was carried out through the R Studio 3.0.1 program under the following criteria: the method of weighted means of least squares and the adjusted estimate of the variance (WLSMV) because its approximation comprised a multivariate distribution and the data are ordinal (Gana & Broc, 2019; Beauducel & Herzberg, 2006); adjustment rates such as the SRMR ( $\leq .05$ ), RMSEA ( $\leq .05$ ), CFI ( $\geq .95$ ), and the global ratio  $X^2 / gl < 2$  (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The evidences of the reliability of the instruments were obtained through the internal consistency method with the coefficients  $\alpha$  and  $\omega \geq .70$ .

Then, the variable self-esteem as mediator were estimated (Baron & Kenny 1986) between Bullying and Resilience, using the program Jamovi 0.9.5.12, under the following criteria: the direct and indirect effect is verified as significant ( $p \leq .05$ ). Likewise, to be considered a mediator in a partial category, the direct and indirect effect are considered significant ( $p \leq .05$ ), and for a total category mediation, the indirect effect is considered non-significant ( $p \geq .05$ ) (Ato & Vallejo, 2015).

The research project was evaluated by the Ethics Commission of the School of Psychology. Before applying the instruments, permission was first obtained from the directors of the educational institutions that were part of the study sample. The consent and informed consent of the parents and students was also obtained. The participants were explained the implications of the participation of the study, which despite their voluntary acceptance could desist from continuing if some procedure affected their sensitivity. There was no rejection of participation or any discomfort during the application of the research instruments.

## Results

### Description of extreme scores

The instruments, Autotest Cisneros de Escobar Escolar (AC), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (EA) and Resilience Scale of Wagnild and Young (ER), presented values of asymmetry and kurtosis within the expected range  $[-2, 2]$  (Muthén & Kaplan, 1985, 1992; Bandalos & Finney, 2010). Regarding compliance with the multivariate normality assumption, the Mardia coefficient  $> 70$  was obtained ( $[G^2 = 103.39, p < .00]$ , Mardia, 1970).

## Internal structure of the instruments

For the three instruments, global adjustment indices of  $X^2 / gl \leq 5$  (Table 1) were obtained, being considered adequate; likewise, the comparative adjustment index  $CFI \geq .90$ ,  $SRMR \leq .08$  and  $RMSEA \leq .08$  (Hu & Bentler, 1999) obtained acceptable adjustment indices.

Regarding the scale of school bullying (EA) it was necessary to specify the model until the most appropriate adjustment was obtained, removing a total of 13 items, because the factorial loads were below the required  $\lambda < .30$ ; Also, in the scale of self-esteem (EA) two items had to be removed, which improved the adjustment indexes (eg,  $CFI_{(10items)} = .908$ ,  $CFI_{(8items)} = .928$ ) and finally the scale of Resilience (ER) has also been re-specified by removing five items and with optimal results (eg,  $CFI_{(10items)} = .658$ ,  $CFI_{(8items)} = .953$ ). These results allowed confirming evidence of validity based on the internal structure of the instruments.

Table 1

*Index of adjustment of the internal structure of the study variables AC, EA y ER (n=490)*

	X <sup>2</sup>	gl	Chi/gl	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA	IC 90% RMSEA
AC - M1	1835.832	1006	1.82	.763	.071	.061	[.056, .065]
M2	1153.470	712	1.62	.854	.062	.051	[.046, .056]
M3	1114.587	710	1.57	.867	.062	.049	[.043, .054]
M4	852.711	604	1.41	.908	.057	.042	[.035, .048]
EA - M1	822.450	242	3.39	.908	.083	.070	[.065, .075]
M2	552.998	160	3.45	.928	.078	.071	[.064, .077]
ER - M1	194.439	34	5.79	.658	.088	.098	[.085, .011]
M2	29.223	12	2.43	.953	.040	.060	[.032, .088]

Note: X<sup>2</sup>: Chi square, gl: degrees of freedom; X<sup>2</sup> / gl: chi square ratio / degrees of freedom, CFI: comparative adjustment index, TLI: Tucker Lewis index, SRMR: residual root standardized quadratic mean, RMSEA: mean square error of approximation.

Evidence of reliability by the internal consistency method the reliability of the ER and CA scales through the alpha and Omega coefficient, acceptable values were obtained: ER ( $\alpha = .66$ ,  $\omega = .66$ ) and CA ( $\alpha = .87$ ,  $\omega = .88$ ), except for the ER that are below the value ( $\alpha$  and  $\omega \leq .70$ ); However, these results, although they are slightly below the established value as a criterion, allow to accept the reliability of the instrument.



## Estimation of mediation

According to the criteria established for the mediating role (see table 2, figure 2), it was evidenced that the indirect estimate  $E_t(a \times b) = -.081$ , which is equivalent to 77.4% ( $[p < .05]$ , statistically significant) of mediation between the relationship of school harassment and resilience. For its part, the direct estimate  $E_t(c) = -.023$  ( $[p > .05]$ ,  $p = .818$  not statistically significant), equivalent to 22.6% of direct effect and; finally, with a total estimate of  $E_t(c + a \times b) = -.104$  evidencing 100% effect ( $[p > .05]$ , not statistically significant).

Table 2  
*Mediation estimates*

Effect	$E_t$	E	$\beta$	DE	RC	$p$	% M
Indirect	$a \times b$	-.081	-	.028	-2.871	.004	77.4
Direct	c	-.023	-	.102	-.23	.818	22.6
Total	$c + a \times b$	-.104	-	.104	-1.006	.314	100
Bullying → Self-esteem	a	-.091	-.16	.026	-3.477	< .001	-
Self-esteem → Resilienc e	b	.889	.23	.174	5.086	< .001	-
Bullying → Resilienc e	c	-.023	-.02	.102	-.23	.818	-

Note.  $E_t$ : label, E: non-standardized estimates,  $\beta$ : standardized estimates, DE: standard deviation of non-standardized estimates, RC: critical ratio,  $p$ : statistical significance, % M: mediating percentage.

## Estimation of direct effects

With respect to the direct effect of school bullying on resilience (see figure 1 and table 2), the standardized and inverse value of  $\beta = -.02$  was verified with significance level  $p > .05$  ( $p = .818$ ), apparently the levels of bullying would not be generating a direct effect on resilience; likewise, the direct effect of the variable self-esteem on resilience with value  $\beta = .23$  was verified, this value would be indicating acceptable statistical significance with  $p < .001$ ; therefore, self-esteem directly influences resilience levels. The inverse effect of the bullying variable on self-esteem was also confirmed ( $\beta = -.16$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

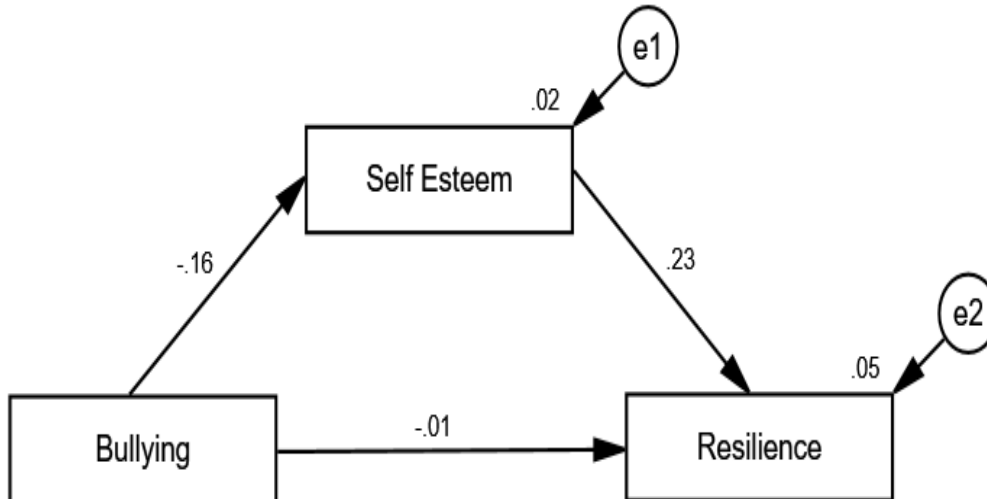


Figura 2. Structural model of the study variables

## Discussion

The objective of the present study was to expose the mediating effects of self-esteem between bullying and resilience in a sample of Peruvian adolescents. The results show that bullying generates an indirect effect on resilience, while self-esteem gains greater notoriety as a mediator.

In relation to the objective outlined, the results refer that there is an effect of school bullying indirectly towards resilience. These results were similar to those proposed by Moore and Woodcock (2017), those who manifest that those individuals who are deficient in developing such capacity tend to exhibit intimidating behaviors, as well as those who show poorer levels of resilience, tend to be victims of intimidation. The effect would be that those students with low levels of resilience could not use it to confront a conflictive situation, affecting their behavior, socio-emotional development, adjustment and personality. Sapouna and Wolke (2013), mention that in order to not become a victim to processes of intimidation is necessary to have internal factors such as self-esteem and internal control, which would play a protective and mediating role. Sapouna and Wolke (2013), mention that in order not to fall into intimidation victimization processes, it is necessary to have internal factors such as self-esteem and internal control, which would play a protective and mediating role.

Such factors would be installed in family dynamics and would be related to the development of psychosocial skills in adolescents as a strategy of their own emotional and behavioral adjustment (Luthar & Zigler, 1991). Coopersmith (1967) stated that self-esteem is based on the evaluation that the individual makes and maintains commonly in reference as well, expressing an attitude of approval or disapproval. It is in this latter consequence that bullying directly influences the individual's own image, affecting their own perception, generating internal conflicts in the victim and as a consequence, decreasing their self-esteem according to the degree of conflict.

The present study shows that the effect of bullying on self-esteem is indirect in the study sample. These results are similar to the findings found in the research conducted by Pajuelo (2017), who states that the greater the bullying, the lower the self-esteem in adolescents. Also the results suggest that self-esteem plays a fundamental mediating role, reinforcing in turn the role of resilience (Tsaousis, 2016), the results also approximate those found by González Arratia et. al. (2017), who demonstrated the mediating role of self-esteem, negative affect and resilience, then two factors that interrelate and reinforce each other; if these conditions were not related, we would have victimization behaviors with greater impact on the emotional behavior of the subjects. It has been verified that self-esteem fulfills the mediating role and with levels of acceptable statistical significance between bullying and resilience in the study sample.

In the present study, the psychometric benefits of the research instruments used have been verified, with adequate global adjustments, but in the three instruments evaluated some items had to be removed in order to adapt the model (Hu & Bentler, 1999). These findings would indicate that the final items of each of the instruments would need more verifications to apply instruments with greater adjustment power and psychometric goodness.

The limitations of the research are that it is a cross-sectional study, the sample was collected in a single moment, postponing the discussion of the effects and its direction through longitudinal investigations. On the other hand, sampling is intentional, not probabilistic; therefore, generalizations should be taken with caution.

Among the future lines of research, it can be suggested to carry out inquiries in relation to the different types of bullying expression and its influence on resilience and self-esteem, as well as carry out follow-up studies of both variables. It is also important try to appreciate the role of other variables that can play an important role between bullying and resilience: social skills, social support, sociodemographic factors, self-control, coping styles, emotional intelligence, type of personality. Finally, recommend that a selected sample be used with random sampling criteria.

### **Declaration of conflict of interest**

The authors declare that there are no potential conflicts in relation to the investigation, authorship, co-authorship or publication of this article.

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