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Children and youth victimization: Detection and reporting from school staff members

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**CHILDREN AND YOUTH VICTIMIZATION: DETECTION AND
REPORTING FROM SCHOOL STAFF MEMBERS**

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The current thesis is based on three studies published in peer-reviewed journals, in accordance with the regulations approved by the Doctoral Committee of the University of Barcelona. During the course of this research, I was visiting scholar at the Universidade Tras-os-Montes e Alto Duoro (UTAD), Porto, Portugal, under the supervision of Dr. Ricardo Barroso from January to February 2017, and at the Université Paris-Diderot, France, under the supervision of Dr. Aziz Essadek, from July to October 2018.

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*How many times can a man turn his head
And pretend that he just doesn't see? (...)
And how many ears must one man have
Before he can hear people cry?
Yes, and how many deaths will it take 'til he knows
That too many people have died?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind
The answer is blowin' in the wind*

Bob Dylan, 1962.

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Index

Summary	8
Resumen	10
1. Introduction	12
1.1. Developmental victimology	13
1.1.2. Victimology within schools.....	16
1.2. Contextualization	25
1.2.1. Victimology in Spain	25
1.2.2. Education in Spain	27
1.2.3. Victimology within schools in Spain	28
1.3. Justification of the current research.....	32
1.4. Aims and hypotheses.....	34
1.5. Timeline	37
2. Studies	38
2.1. Study 1: School staff members experience and knowledge in the reporting of potential child and youth victimization.....	39
2.1.1. Abstract	40
2.1.2. Introduction	41
2.1.3. Method	43
2.1.4. Results	46
2.1.5. Discussion	54
2.1.6. Conclusions	59
2.1.7. References	59
2.2. Study 2: Detection and reporting potential victimization cases from school: The role of knowledge.	64
2.2.1. Abstract	65
2.2.2. Introduction.....	65
2.2.3. Methods.....	69
2.2.4. Results	73
2.2.5. Discussion	81
2.2.6. Conclusions	83
2.2.7. References	84
2.3. Study 3: Why do school staff sometimes fail to report potential victimization cases? A mixed-methods study	94
2.3.1. Abstract	95
2.3.2. Introduction.....	95
2.3.3. Methods.....	97
2.3.4. Results	102

2.3.5. Discussion	113
2.3.6. Conclusions	115
2.3.7. References	116
3. Discussion	121
3.1. Prevention	122
3.2. Detection	123
3.3. Reporting.....	124
3.4. Practical implications.....	127
3.5. Strengths, limitations and future research.....	129
4. Conclusions	132
References.....	135
Appendices.....	154
Appendix 1: Full protocol of the used instrument.....	155
Appendix 2: Questionnaire pretest.....	164
Appendix 3: Missing data handling	166
Appendix 4: Statistic for each analyzed variable of the imputed dataset (study #2).....	167

List of tables

Table 1. Overall prevalence rates reported by meta-analysis of different types of violence.....	14
Table 2. Summary of the results of the most recent review found about factors influencing report from schools.	23
Table 3. Children at risk in Spain based on the data merged in the website Infancia en Datos.	26
Table 4. Studies in Spain assessing school staff members' knowledge or interventions regarding children and youth victimization.....	29
Table 5. Summary of studies aims, research questions, hypotheses, and findings.....	35
Table 6. Gant chart.	37
Table 7. Sample characteristics.	43
Table 8. Percentage of endorsement for questions on previous experience.	47
Table 9. Percentages of endorsement per statement about knowledge. Victimization module..	49
Table 10. Percentages of endorsement. Detection module.	50
Table 11. Percentages of endorsement. Reporting module.	51
Table 12. Explaining reporting of suspected cases behavior.....	53
Table 13. Proportions of participants answering correctly in non-detectors, inconsistent reporters and consistent reporters' groups, and distribution of other variables of interest.	75
Table 14. Logistic regressions to test the influence of knowledge in detecting and reporting potential victimization cases.	80
Table 15. Sampling strategy.	89
Table 16. Comparison of the results of the analyses with the raw data (all complete observations for each analysis) and multiple imputation ($m = 10$).	90
Table 17. Results of the logistic regression models to test the influence of knowledge in detecting and reporting potential victimization cases with multiple imputation ($m = 40$).	93
Table 18. Sample characteristics.	97
Table 19. Categorization System.....	104
Table 20. Distribution of respondents according to the main category.....	110
Table 21. Reference for each knowledge statement.	119
Table 22. Results for analyzed variables in each imputed dataset.....	167

List of figures

Figure 1. Criterion for defining a behavior as violent according to Hamby (2017).	13
Figure 2. Intervention programs based in educational settings included in the WHO database.	17
Figure 3. Mandatory reporting as reported by the Internation Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (Dubowitz et al., 2018)	22
Figure 4. Spanish educational system.	27
Figure 5. Reports of potential maltreatment cases coming from different sectors according to the Registro Unificado de Maltrato Infantil (RUMI).	32
Figure 6. Treemap of suspected cases.	103
Figure 7. Path of suspected cases referred only within the school.....	107
Figure 8. Level of knowledge of victimization (a), detection (b) and reporting (c) knowledge of participants assigned to each category	112
Figure 9. Levels of variables influencing the decision to report.	127
Figure 10. Visits to each of the available versions of the course.	129
Figure 11. Questionnaire design procedure.....	164
Figure 12. Distribution of missing cases for knowledge statements.	166
Figure 13. Distirbution of missing cases for other variables.....	166

Summary

Violence affects many children and youth, causing devastating effects. Schools are in an ideal position to prevent, detect and report potential victimization cases. Yet, studies have found several limitations to perform these tasks, like misconceptions or lack of knowledge and resources. Besides, the empirical evidence of the effect of each of these variables in the detection and reporting experience is limited.

This thesis composed by three original empirical studies addresses the experience of school staff members with children and youth victimization, its detection and the reporting of potential cases, as well as their level of knowledge. The studies have been published as detailed in the “Studies” section.

The sample for studies 1 and 2 was composed by 184 staff members between 22 and 64 years old (84.04% females, $M = 43.40$, $SD = 10.37$). Sample for study 3 included 453 school staff members (83.53% females) between 22 and 65 years old ($M = 42.23$, $SD = 9.46$). Participants answered a self-administered questionnaire created *ad-hoc*, including questions about experience with victimization (e.g., “Have you received any training regarding child victimization?”), its detection (e.g., “How many times during your career did you suspect that a minor might be being victimized?”) and its reporting (e.g., “Have you ever you report a child abuse suspicion to an external agency outside school (e.g., social services)?”). The level of knowledge was tested through statements about victimization (e.g., “Child victimization affects less than 10% of minors in Spain”), its detection (e.g., “A minor growing up in a one-parent family is more likely to experience victimization”) and its reporting (e.g., “If a suspicions turns out not to be true, the family is entitled to sue the informant”) that participants had to classify as true, false or unknown. Descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies, percentages, proportions, means and standard deviations), bivariate (i.e., Chi-square and Kruskal-Wallis test with their corresponding effect sizes) multivariate (i.e., logistic regression) and qualitative analysis were used to respond to each study’s aims.

A small proportion of school staff has ever been trained regarding childhood and youth victimization. Over 70% has suspected that a student might be being victimized at least once. However, only around 40% of those who ever detected a potential case reported outside school. The majority of those who reported perceived the intervention that followed the report as beneficial for the child’s well-being. The decision not to report was mostly based on what happened once participants shared their concerns within the school. Other reasons not to report were thinking that their suspicions needed to be serious or certain, unclear definitions, feeling they were not entitled, lack of knowledge and fears. With each year of experience, the likelihood to detect a potential case increased by one time. The likelihood of reporting was significantly higher among school staff with accurate and concrete knowledge in reporting procedures (e.g.,

anonymity, need for the principal's consent). Reporter's gender (i.e., males were more likely to report than females) or the role they performed in school (i.e., workers who only came into contact with children specifically or sporadically reported significantly less than those who spent at least for hours a day in charge of groups of students) were also relevant.

Results found complement previous research by quantifying the proportion of suspicions of potential victimization cases that go underreported from school. Findings contribute to dispel misconceptions about the efficiency of social services interventions and suggest ways in which early report can be increased. Empirical evidence of the effect of specific aspects of knowledge in reporting is provided and internal school dynamics that might prevent some concerns to reach external agencies are described.

Keywords: children and youth victimization; violence; school; school staff; detection; report.

Resumen

La violencia interpersonal afecta muchos niños, niñas y adolescentes causando efectos devastadores. Las escuelas están en posición ideal para prevenir, detectar y notificar potenciales casos de violencia, pero los estudios reportan limitaciones como la persistencia de falsas creencias o falta de conocimiento y recursos. Además, la evidencia empírica del efecto de estas variables en la acción de detectar y notificar es limitada.

La presente tesis, compuesta por tres investigaciones originales, estudia la experiencia y el conocimiento de trabajadores escolares respecto de la victimización infantil y adolescente, su detección y notificación. Los estudios han sido publicados como se detalla en el apartado titulado “Studies”.

La muestra de los estudios 1 y 2 fue de 184 trabajadores escolares de entre 22 y 64 años (84,04% mujeres, $M = 43,40$, $DT = 10,37$). En el estudio 3 se incluyeron 453 sujetos (83,53% mujeres) de entre 22 y 65 años ($M = 42,23$, $DT = 9,46$). Los participantes respondieron a un cuestionario autoadministrado creado *ad-hoc*, que incluía preguntas sobre victimización (p. ej., “¿Ha recibido alguna formación sobre victimización infantil?”), detección (p. ej., “En sus años de experiencia trabajando con niños/as, ¿cuántas veces ha sospechado que un/a niño/a podía estar siendo victimizado?”) y notificación (p. ej., “¿Alguna vez ha realizado alguna notificación oficial de victimización infantil a un organismo externo a la escuela (como los Servicios Sociales, por ejemplo)?”). Se evaluó el nivel de conocimiento con frases sobre la victimización (p. ej., “La victimización infantil es una problemática que afecta aproximadamente a menos de un 10% de los niños en España”), su detección (p. ej., “Un/a niño/a con familia monoparental tiene mayores posibilidades de ser victimizado/a.”) y su notificación (p. ej., “Si una sospecha resulta no ser cierta, la familia tiene derecho a demandar judicialmente al informante”) que debían clasificarse como ciertas, falsas o desconocidas. Se obtuvieron estadísticos descriptivos (i.e., frecuencias, porcentajes, proporciones, medias y desviaciones típicas), se hicieron análisis bivariados (i.e., prueba de Chi-cuadrado y Kruskal-Wallis con su correspondiente tamaño del efecto), multivariante (i.e., regresiones logísticas) y cualitativos para responder a los objetivos de cada estudio.

Una minoría se ha formado en victimización infantil y adolescente. Más del 70% ha sospechado que alguno de sus estudiantes podría estar siendo victimizado/a. De ellos, sólo el 40% notificó alguna vez por fuera de la escuela. La mayoría de quienes habían notificado consideraron que la posterior intervención fue beneficiosa para el menor. La decisión de no notificar se tomó mayormente luego de compartir la sospecha con otros miembros del equipo. Otras razones para no notificar fueron creer que se necesitaba que la violencia sea grave o tener la certeza de que estaba ocurriendo, definiciones confusas, sentir que no se tenía derecho o responsabilidad, falta de conocimiento y miedo. Con cada año de experiencia, la probabilidad de detectar al menos un potencial caso de victimización se incrementa una vez. La probabilidad de notificar es

significativa más alta entre los participantes que tienen conocimiento concreto del procedimiento (p. ej., anonimidad, acuerdo de la dirección). El género (i.e., los hombres presentan mayor probabilidad de notificar que las mujeres) o el cargo (i.e., quienes sólo entraban en contacto con los estudiantes esporádica o específicamente tendían a notificar menos que quienes pasaban al menos cuatro horas al día a cargo de grupos de niños/as) también resultaron relevantes.

Esta tesis complementa trabajos anteriores cuantificando la proporción potenciales casos de victimización que no se notifican a autoridades exteriores desde la escuela. Los resultados contribuyen a desmitificar opiniones adversas sobre la eficiencia de los servicios sociales y sugieren maneras de aumentar la notificación temprana. Además, presenta evidencia empírica de los efectos del conocimiento en la notificación y aporta conocimiento sobre las dinámicas internas de las escuelas que pueden dificultar este paso.

Palabras clave: victimización infantil y adolescente; violencia; escuela; trabajadores escolares; detección; notificación.

1. Introduction

1.1. Developmental victimology

Global agreement on the need to tackle violence against children and youth is reflected on current political agenda. In fact, the 16.2 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to change the world is to end all forms of violence against children by 2030 (United Nations, 2016; 2019). Institutions like the World Health Organization (WHO) have declared violence as a global public health issue and put considerable effort in raising awareness about the extent and impact of this phenomenon, warning that every five minutes a child dies as a result of violence around the world (Mikton et al., 2016). Yet, investment in violence prevention and intervention is still far from what is needed to compensate for its enormous costs (Hillis et al., 2017; Perezniето et al., 2014).

The present thesis aims to contribute to this huge global challenge. It is framed within the developmental victimology theory, which conceives interpersonal violence as the damage produced by human behaviors that go against social standards (Finkelhor, 2007). This definition distinguishes victimization from other types of potentially harmful situations (like accidents, catastrophes, or self-defense aggression) by highlighting the human component. In line with this conception, a violent act can only be considered as such when it includes four essential elements (Hamby, 2017), illustrated in Figure 1.

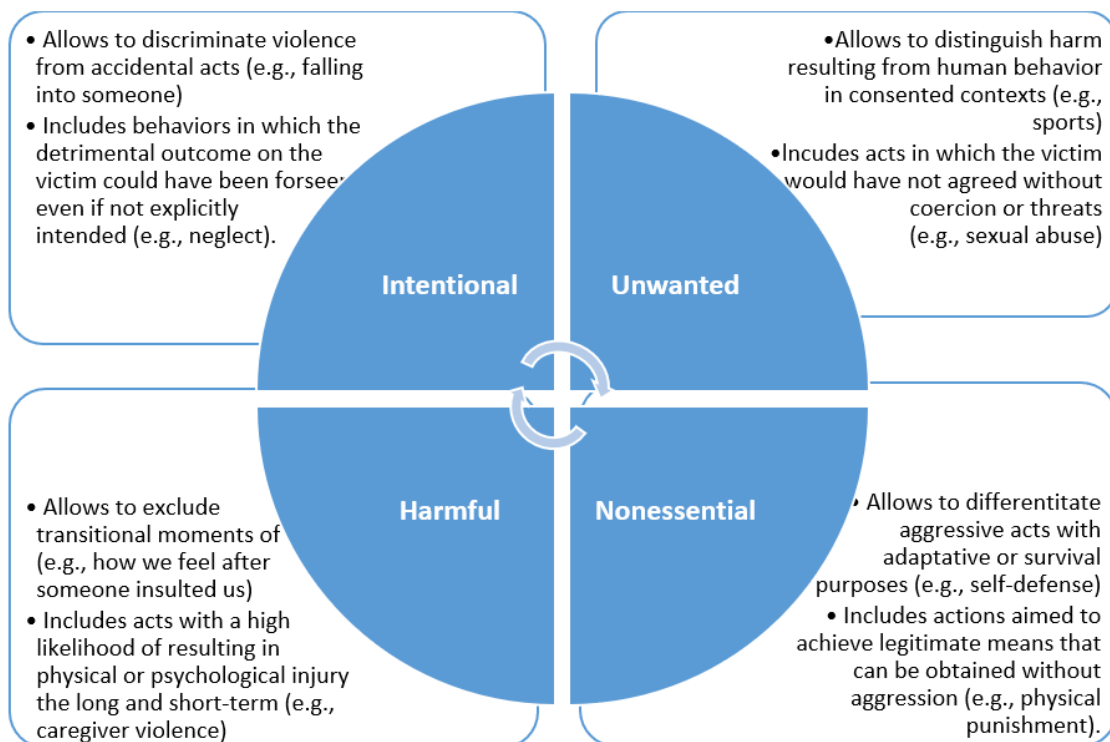


Figure 1. Criterion for defining a behavior as violent according to Hamby (2017). Source: Own elaboration.

This approach also highlights the importance to consider the unique impact that violent experiences may have when they occur during childhood or adolescence. These developmental stages of life put individuals in a particularly vulnerable position due to different features linked to their evolutionary state, like their small size and physical strength or they lack of knowledge, experience and self-control (Finkelhor, 2007). In addition to these individual factors, some characteristics of our society also increase children and adolescents' vulnerability. Social norms tend to punish less severely violence against children (with some exceptions like sex crimes) than violence that occur between adults. Any adult who punches their partner has larger probabilities of facing legal charges than any parent who hits their child and the same pattern holds when comparing an adult that is hit by a co-worker to a child that is hit by another in a playground (Finkelhor, 2013). Besides, given their dependency from the adult, children and adolescents choices are constrained by adults' decision that affects them. They do not have the possibility to leave a family, change school or move from their neighborhoods by themselves and most importantly, they cannot represent themselves to take political action and claim for their rights. In sum, children and adolescents' stage of development is linked with a dependency from adults, which makes them more vulnerable to violence than any other member of society.

This vulnerability is mirrored in the epidemiological studies trying to approach the prevalence of this phenomenon. According to a systematic review including data from 96 countries extracted from 112 studies (Hillis et al., 2016a), at least half of all children between 2 and 17 years old experienced violence in the past year. In high income countries between 4 and 16% of all children experience physical abuses, around 20% are sexually abused and one in ten are neglected or psychologically abused (Gilbert et al., 2009b). In low-middle or low income countries, the prevalence of experiencing at least one type of victimization is over 75% (Le et al., 2018). Even recognizing the effect of methodological moderators like the sampling or the sample size (Prevoo et al., 2017), or the lack of studies in some geographical regions (Stoltenborgh et al., 2015), meta-analyses focused on different types of violence show impressive rates, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Overall prevalence rates reported by meta-analysis of different types of violence.

Study	Type of violence	<i>n</i>	<i>k</i>	Estimated prevalence
Madigan et al., 2018	Unwanted online sexual exposure	37,649	31	20.3%
	Unwanted online sexual solicitation	18,272	9	11.5%
Modecki et al., 2014	Bullying victimization	335,519	72	33.0%

	Cyber-bullying victimization	335,519	72	15.2%
Pereda et al., 2009	Sexual abuse	101,022	65	17.9% for girls 7.9% for boys
Stoltenborgh et al., 2011	Sexual abuse	9,911,748	21 7	18.0% for girls 7.6% for boys
Stoltenborgh et al., 2012	Emotional abuse	7,082,279	29	36.0%
Stoltenborgh et al., 2013a	Physical neglect Emotional neglect	59,406 59,655	13 16	16.3% 18.4%
Stoltenborgh et al., 2013b	Physical abuse	9,643,299	16 8	17.7%
Wincentak et al., 2017	Physical teen dating violence	Unreported	96	20.0%
Wincentak et al., 2017	Sexual teen dating violence	Unreported	31	9.0%

In addition, the accumulated evidence about the unique (usually more negative and long lasting) impact of experiences of violence during childhood or youth in mental and physical health (Hillis et al., 2017; Kisely et al., 2020; Widom et al., 2012), social outcomes such as education (Fry et al., 2018; Gardella et al., 2016; Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010) and criminal behavior (Assink et al., 2018; Besemer et al., 2017), the economic costs (Pereznieta et al., 2014; Shahi et al., 2020) or even deaths (Gilbert et al., 2009a) points at the damage it brings not only to individual across their life span but to society as a whole. Recent research lines also alert that having experienced violence increased the likelihood of facing new violent episodes of different kinds, by multiple perpetrators and in different contexts (Finkelhor et al., 2007; Mitchell et al., 2020; Obsuth et al., 2018). This approach recognizes the importance of research focused on one type of violence to account on particular effects and characteristics of each experience. But also highlights the need to consider violence from a broader perspective, as the so-called poly-victimization (Turner et al., 2016) or the accumulation of different violent experiences report alarming rates and effects in studies conducted in very diverse contexts (Álvarez-Lister et al., 2014; Méndez-López & Pereda, 2019; Mossige & Huang, 2017; Segura et al., 2015; Suárez-Soto et al., 2019)

Despite all this huge evidence, we still struggle to act on behalf of children's and adolescent's right on an everyday basis. Although it is true that there has been increasing awareness and sensitivity towards children and adolescents' rights (Agathis et al., 2018; Hundeide & Armstrong,

2011; WHO, 2020), children's right to protection, particularly when it comes to violence seems very hard to address effectively. Professionals from health sector (Brady, 2018; Diderich et al., 2014; Pietrantonio et al., 2013; Tiyyagura et al., 2019) child protective services (Dagan et al., 2016; Dumbrill, 2006) and legal enforcement agencies (Baca et al., 2001; Elliffe & Holt, 2019) show several important challenges in terms of their response to potential or confirmed child and youth victimization. Studies including teachers, counsellors or other school staff also point in this direction (Crowell & Levi, 2012; Feng et al., 2010; McDaniel, 2006), showing that this environment presents important challenges in this sense as well.

1.1.2. Victimology within schools

In most countries, school is mandatory, so over 90% of all children attend there on a daily basis, spending over half of their awoken time in that context (OCDE, 2012). This provides children with huge opportunities to bond with adults beyond their primary family environment and school staff with enormous advantages in terms of child protection. Not only school staff are in direct contact with children many hours a day, most days of the week, but the context in which they work present several strengths in terms of prevention, detection and responding to violence. Thanks to their preparation and everyday working tasks, school staff is familiar with the healthy development of children and adolescents at different stages. This allows them to observe potential indicators of exposure to violence in several domains quite easily. For instance, sudden drops in academic achievement, school attendance or dropout (Beran & Lupart, 2009; Fry et al., 2018; Gubbels et al., 2019; Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010), isolation from peers or fear from adults and deviant (Naughton et al., 2013; Soler et al., 2012; Turner et al., 2006) behavior (Berthelon et al., 2020; Chapple & Vaske, 2010; Neaverson et al., 2020) are just few examples of potential signs of children and youth victimization which are mostly identified in educational settings. Besides, professionals working in the educational environment have access to information that other professionals are usually deprived of: they can witness familiar interactions, contact the family and ask for information if needed or propose safe spaces to establish sincere dialogue with their students (Gilbert et al., 2009a). Despite all this potential, this environment presents huge persistent challenges in terms of their response to potential child and adolescent victimization. A review about each of the actions that can be taken regarding children and youth victimization from school is detailed in the following sections.

1.1.2.1. Prevention.

How to decide whether prevention strategies are effective can be very challenging to measure, as we cannot account for how much violence would have potentially occur without the intervention. Besides, the contextual effects of each intervention may play an important role and make it hard to generalize the application of succesful strategies. Another important issue is the

divergency of the proposals in terms of type of violence addressed, the target public, the aims of the activity and the outcome measure. Figure 2 shows a very brief summary of the 33 studies analyzing the effect of programs based in educational settings to prevent different types of violence as provided by the WHO. As it can be seen, most programs focus on bullying and more interventions are proposed to adolescents ($n = 18$) in comparison to children aged between 4 and 10 years old ($n = 12$).

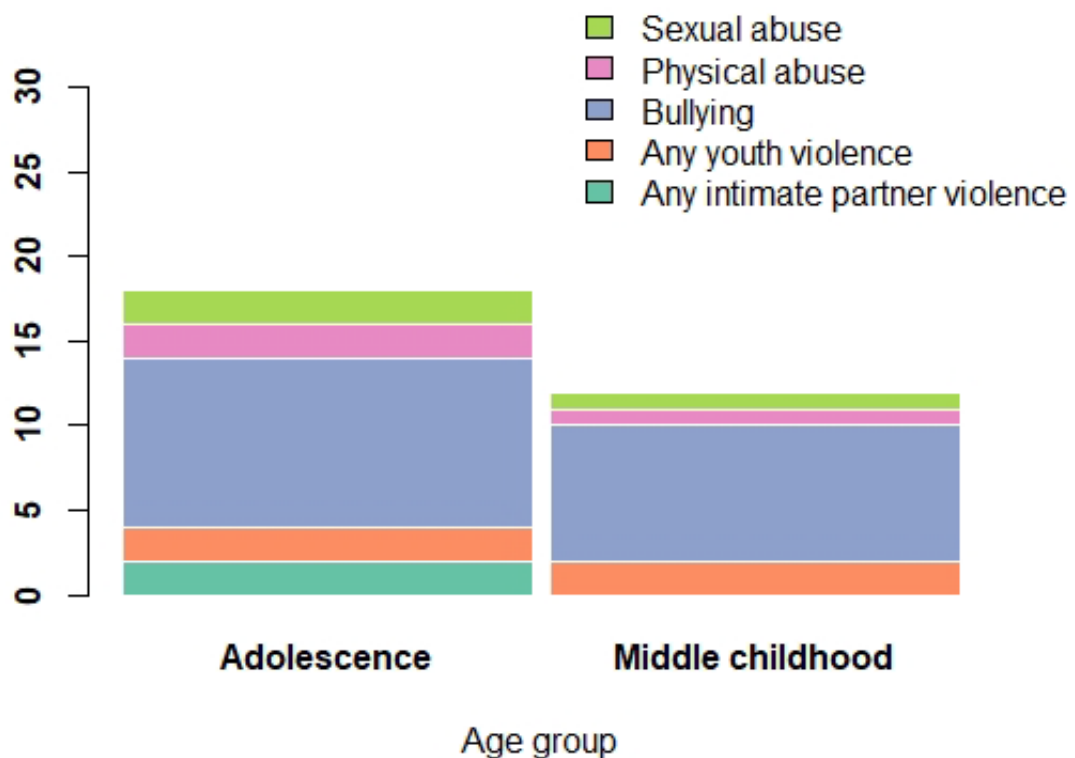


Figure 2. Intervention programs based in educational settings included in the WHO database. According to this source, activities targeting children between 4 and 10 years old are included in the “Middle childhood” age group, whereas activities including students over 10 and up to 19 years old are considered as interventions targeting “Adolescence”. A total of 33 programs were included but age group was missing for 3 out of them. Source: Own elaboration, based on WHO database, available at <https://apps.who.int/violence-info/>

Considering this heterogeneity and complexity, most meta-analyses generally try to combine the effects found in randomized control trials (Russell et al., 2021; Walsh et al., 2018). On the other hand, systematic reviews usually state the components of effective programs (Fryda & Hulme, 2015; Gaffney et al., 2019). Presumably, programs focused on different types of violence may show divergent results because what might be effective to peer victimization, like bullying (Jiménez-Barbero et al., 2016; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011) or dating violence (De La Rue et al., 2017; Edwards & Hinsz, 2014; Russell et al., 2021) may not be as relevant to address child abuse (Brassard & Fiorvanti, 2015). In this sense, studies evaluating the effectiveness of programs

aimed at tackling peer-victimization report more encouraging results, like significant reduction of bullying self-reported perpetration and victimization by 15-16% and 19-20% respectively (Gaffney et al., 2019) or positive effect sizes that ranged from .75 to .79 for the reduction of emotional and physical teen dating violence perpetration and victimization. In comparison, reviews about sexual abuse prevention programs found that child self-protective skills were significantly improved after intervention and retained after 6 months (Walsh et al., 2018) but findings in terms of disclosure or how these gained competence may in fact reduce the likelihood of experience sexual abuse remains unknown. This gloomy picture applies to training and prevention programs targeting at families beyond the school context and including other types of risks, like physical abuse (Euser et al., 2015).

Based on these evidence and in previous studies showing the link between mental health and educational outcomes (Becker et al., 2014), current preventive strategies are proposing a broader approach, called trauma-informed schools (Crosby, 2015; Hoover, 2019; Thomas et al., 2019). This includes not only targeting for children at risk for violence or other traumatic situations, but also fostering mental healthy habitudes both among students and school staff, provide strategies to develop resilience and create a school environment which is safe and trustworthy (Osofsky & Lieberman, 2011). The perspective seems to be particularly benefit to maltreated children (Paiva, 2019), as it overcomes the stigmatization and focus on the potential post-traumatic growth. Projects framed in these promesing approaches provide evidence of reduction in the number of experienced incidents by over 87% (Dorado et al., 2016), but also improvements in school adjustment and in mental health outcomes (Ko et al., 2008), like increased hope or decreased post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms (Fondren et al., 2020; Hillis, et al., 2016; Zakszeski et al., 2017).

1.1.2.3. Detection.

Studies about the proportion of school staff suspecting that a child under their care might be being victimized vary widely, with percentages ranging from 15% out of 2,017 pre-school teachers (Svensson et al., 2015) or 16.3% out of 1877 primary school teachers (Bibou-Nakou & Markos, 2017) to 74% out of 568 teachers (Abrahams et al., 1992) or 81% out of 296 primary school teachers (Goebbels et al., 2008). Based on a recent review (Alazri & Hanna, 2020) these differences may arouse because of methodological heterogeneity in terms of the instruments used, the sample characteristics, the study designs but most importantly the type of violence addressed, and the definition provided at this aim. Studies tend to consider only one kind of violence (e.g., Oldenburg et al., 2016 on bullying; Edwards et al., 2020 on dating violence; Goldman & Grimbeek, 2015 on sexual abuse or Svensson et al., 2015 on maltreatment) instead of using a broader approach that allows to detect children at risk for any type violence. This fragmented approach also reflects in the idea that a checklist or a bunch of indicators may increase detection

of children at risk, while an integrative approach to observe children's development have proven to be more effective (Dorado et al., 2016; Zakszeski et al., 2017). In addition, some studies include only teachers working in the kindergarten (Feng et al., 2010; Svensson et al., 2015), primary (Goebbels et al., 2008; Sahebihagh et al., 2016; Vanderfaellie et al., 2018) or high school level (Edwards et al., 2020) whereas other exclusively ask school counsellors or principals (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010; Jenkins & Palmer, 2012) or other types of educators, such as early care providers (Dinehart et al., 2016; Mathews et al., 2017). Few studies (e.g., Moon et al., 2017) or reviews (Alazri & Hanna, 2020) include different types of school staff that work in contact with children and adolescents on a daily basis.

In any case, it seems important to consider which variables influence the detection. Most teachers report to be or feel unaware of signs that children and adolescents tend to display when they have been through violent experiences; (Kenny, 2004; Sahebihagh et al., 2016). In fact, a study with 750 school counsellors (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010) proposed that some kinds of violence, like sexual and emotional abuse or supervisory neglect, tend to produce less visible signs, which makes them more challenging to detect. In a recent review (Alazri & Hanna, 2020) neglect and emotional abuse are also pointed at the less easy identifiable types of victimization. However, some studies keep on showing the difficulties associated with identifying child sexual abuse because of the persistency of misconceptions like believing sexual abuse is usually perpetrated by a stranger (Hurtado et al., 2013) or the lack of formal training about this type of violence (Goldman & Grimbeek, 2015).

In an early study with 480 teachers (O'Toole et al., 1999) it was shown that not only the type of violence but other case characteristics could account for 50% of the variance in recognition. A study that compared models to explain detection including case, teacher and school-level variables has concluded that case-characteristics were the ones that contributed the most to explain detection, including frequency and impact of the abuse (Walsh & Farrell, 2008). Other studies have still demonstrated that ethnicity (Vanderfaellie et al., 2018) or families with low resources (King & Scott, 2014) tend to be classified as at risk for violence more likely than victims who do not fit this stereotype, even when prevalence studies show that victimization is not associated with a specific profile (Hillis et al., 2016a). In addition, the context in which victimization may take place also influences the ability to detect potential cases. In a recent study focused on child sexual abuse, 75% out of 450 educators were confident in their ability to recognize sexual abuse but no teacher felt they could rely on their own ability to detect if the sexual abuse was occurring online (Lindenbach et al., 2021).

The lack of a common definition of what constitutes violence -or a reasonable suspicion for violence according to Crowell & Levi's (2012) terms- seems to be a shared limitation to detect potential cases, regardless of the type of violence considered. A study focused on bullying and including 22 primary school teachers and 373 students (Oldenburg et al., 2016) highlighted that

incomplete definitions made teachers unavailable to recognize self-reported victims that belonged to their classrooms. This has also been remarked in a study including interviews of 30 teachers (Falkiner et al., 2017) in which participants argued that ambiguous definitions of neglect were a barrier to identify children potentially at risk. In another study with 197 teachers, vague definitions also were proposed as a key limitation to target children at risk for neglect, physical or sexual abuse (Kenny, 2001).

Training has also been proposed as an important factor to explain the ability of school staff to detect potential cases (Alazri & Hanna, 2020). Many studies (Baginsky, 2003; Bryant & Baldwin, 2010; McGarry & Buckley, 2013; Toros & Tiirik, 2016) claim for training since the beginning of every educator's career, as this population is likely to encounter potential victimization cases since the very first moment they start working with underaged children. In contrast, most school staff tend to declare that they did not receive any training about violence against children or youth (e.g., 2% out of 3,777 school professionals included in the study of AlBuhairan et al., 2011; around 20% of universities or schools cited among the 465 teacher-students participants in the study of Baginsky, 2003). In lack of training, teachers tend to rely on personal and/or professional available resources, which entail several shortfalls (Walsh & Farrell, 2008a), like questioning the children to confirm suspicions (Falkiner et al., 2017) or relying on media as their source of information (Goldman & Grimbeek, 2015). The availability of the training is not the only thing that matters, but also its quality and other resources simultaneously provided to educators to deal with victimization, like time or support (Cunningham et al., 2016). Some studies report that the amount of hours of training does not increase detection (Goebbels et al., 2008) or that the difference in the capacity to detect or elicit disclosures between trained and untrained professionals is not significant (Topping & Barron, 2009). Another evidence questioning the role of training is that studies in which most professionals reported to be trained (e.g., among 137 early care education providers only less than 1% reported to have never been trained in Dinehart et al (2016) find similar limitations that studies performed with mostly untrained participants (Baginsky, 2003; Schols et al., 2013).

In fact, training has been shown to increase knowledge about maltreatment signs and identification among counsellors (Kenny & Abreu, 2016), teachers (Kenny, 2004), and early childhood care providers (Mathews et al., 2017). However, it remains unknown whether the level of knowledge actually has an effect in detecting potential victimization. Some studies argue that teachers without training or with less recent training are more likely to detect potential cases of violence (Haan et al., 2019; Mathews et al., 2008). It has also been proposed that professional experience or self-perceived efficacy contributes more to increase detection than the level of knowledge or having been trained (Goebbels et al., 2008; Kenny & McEachern, 2002). This seems to be confirmed by studies that find fair levels of knowledge about indicators of violence, but poor detection rates (Brown, 2008). A qualitative study including the impressions of 16

primary teachers (Schols et al., 2013) pointed out at the lack of specific knowledge and poor communication with other agencies involved in child protection. This finding has also been aroused in studies including teachers along with other types of professionals in contact with children and adolescents as participants (Feng et al., 2010; Nohilly, 2019; Tiyyagura et al., 2019).

Many victims of different type of violence during their childhood either directly disclose the abuse to a school staff member (Cater et al., 2016) or show signs within the school setting, like a sudden drop in achievement (Gardella et al., 2016), isolation from peers or being involved in physical aggression incidents at school (Buckley et al., 2007). Thus, it seems important to research about what defines the ability to detect potential cases among school staff. Some challenges have been consistently reported by several studies, such as the unclear definitions (Falkiner et al., 2017; Kenny, 2004; Oldenburg et al., 2016) or difficulties to detect some particular type of violence, like emotional abuse or neglect (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010; Vanderfaeillie et al., 2018). Others, like the role of knowledge and training seems to be unclear, due to the aforementioned contradictory findings (Alazri & Hanna, 2020; Haan et al., 2019). But it also seems relevant to assess how school staff respond to these suspicions and to what extent they report them.

1.1.2.3. Reporting.

The reporting of a suspicion that a child might be being victimized to an external agency could be considered as the first step towards resilience (Wekerle, 2013) or as a dangerous decision that might severely (and unfairly) affect those suspected to be the perpetrators (Owhe, 2013). This divergent conception is also mirrored in the different policies that countries adopt. Whereas most countries legally force professionals in contact with children to report any reasonable suspicion, several others keep this decision up to the choice of the potential informant (see Figure 3). Results from empirical studies also differ; while some authors find no difference in reporting rates or disposition to report when comparing regions with and without mandatory reporting for professionals (Krase & DeLong-Hamilton, 2015), other show that in most countries the institution of mandatory reporting tended to increase reports to governmental authorities (Mathews & Bross, 2008). In a qualitative study asking their opinions to 38 school staff and caregivers, the educators were supportive of the mandatory reporting rule in principle, but their reporting decision making were highly related to the context and described as “ambivalent” (Gallagher-Mackay, 2014).

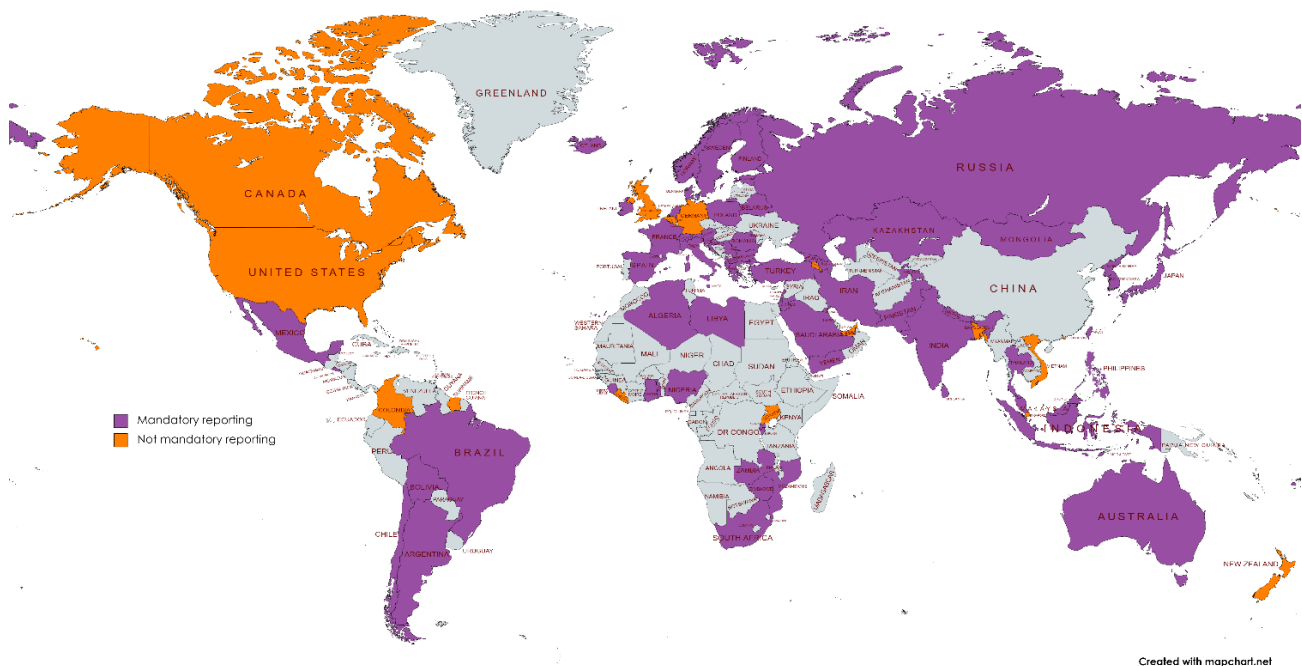


Figure 3. Mandatory reporting as reported by the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (Dubowitz et al., 2018), created using <https://mapchart.net/europe.html>
Note. Countries in grey did not participate in the report.

Regardless of the legal framework, studies that analyze the proportion and characteristics of reports made from school settings show that these institutions report between 16% (Gilbert et al., 2009b) and 35% (King & Scott, 2014) out of all cases. In some countries, like Belgium (Vanderfaeillie et al., 2018), this sector represents the main source of report. In others, like the United States (Gilbert et al., 2009b; McDaniel, 2006) the percentage of reports of children at risk coming from school is similar or lower to those coming from other agencies in less frequent contact with children, like law enforcement agencies (McDaniel, 2006). In any case, the current COVID-19 outbreak that forced schools to shut down in many countries showed that reports are dramatically reduced when educators are not in contact with children on an everyday basis (Baron et al., 2020).

Beyond the proportion of reports of children potentially at risk made by school staff, there are also several studies proposing that reports made by the education sector usually share some features. Reports made by teachers seem to include more child-centered indicators and less family risk factors when compared to other sources of report (King & Scott, 2014). In a study based on 1260 reports of low-income families it was found that teachers were more likely to report families with more children but less likely to report families in which caregivers used alcohol or drugs (McDaniel, 2006). A recent study that showed vignettes of potential cases to 224 school staff (Vanderfaeillie et al., 2018) also shown that participants perceived the non-Western children as more in need of help, which led to a tendency to report more the cases that included children from

this background. Another study using this method found a tendency to underreport children that were exposed to emotional abuse and behave as expected in school in a sample of 480 teachers (Webster et al., 2005).

Studies that directly ask teachers and school staff about their experience with reporting potential victimization cases complement this picture. A study with 598 kindergarten teachers reported that 97% of participants had no experience with reporting and that 11% have assumed to have failed to report at least once (Feng et al., 2010). This percentage was 18% in a study with almost 300 elementary school teachers (Goebbels et al., 2008). Among around 200 elementary school teachers, the percentage of participants that did not have any experience with reporting was 73% (Kenny, 2001). A two-year study with over 2000 pre-school educators found that only 23% out of the 82 cases for which educators were concerned all along the research were ever reported to child protection agencies (Svensson et al., 2015). An early study (O'Toole et al., 1999) found a tendency to underreport cases of physical and emotional abuse that were considered less serious when asking 480 teachers using vignettes.

But what seems harder to answer is what factors influence the decision of reporting. A recent review about this (Alazri & Hanna, 2020) included 14 studies, which results are summed up in Table 2. In addition, this review recalled that the instruments used to measure factors influencing reporting were usually created ad-hoc and rarely reported any psychometric properties, with the exception of Bibou-Nakou & Markos (2017) and Feng et al. (2010).

Table 2. Summary of the results of the most recent review found about factors influencing report from schools.

Factors	Evidence	<i>n</i> (%)
System characteristics		
School educational level	Significantly more reports in elementary and middle/junior school than in high schools	3 (21.43)
Setting	More reports about physical abuse in urban areas. More fears in rural areas.	4 (28.57)
Mandatory reporting	School personnel considered mandatory reporting, even when they doubted about its efficiency.	7 (50)
Victims' characteristics		
Socioeconomic status	Inconsistent findings, one report significant relationships whereas the other does not.	2 (14.29)
Severity	Significant association with reporting	1 (7.14)
Reporters' characteristics		
		14 (100)

Knowledge	School personnel with insufficient knowledge avoid reporting, especially in cases of emotional abuse and neglect	10 (71.43)
Experiences and training	Inconsistencies: some studies report a positive relationship between training and reporting, and others a negative one. Some studies found that the influence of past reporting experience depended on if they were mostly negative or positive. One study reported a negative non-significant correlation between years of working experience and reporting.	4 (28.57)
Self-confidence and personal control	Self-perception about own ability to deal with reporting significantly influence the decision to report.	2 (14.29)
Relationships	Lack of support and use of subjective norms was associated with reluctance to report	4 (28.57)
Beliefs and attitudes	The evaluation of the potential negative outcomes for the child, for the family, for the reporter or for the dynamics among these three stakeholders influenced the decision to report in most studies. In some studies, school personnel did not consider reporting as their responsibility, which led to weaker intentions to report.	11 (78.57)
Fear and uncertainty	Concerns about making unsubstantiated or mistaken reports were consistently found as a reason not to report.	2 (14.29)

The evidence collected by studies excluded from this review can complement the results. Regarding the system characteristics, Walsh et al. (2008) found that only a small proportion of the variance in the reporting scores of the 254 teachers that participated in their study were attributable to school membership and the teacher level attention to legal reporting obligations. In fact, most of the variance could be explained by case characteristics (mainly type, frequency, severity), which was consistent with previous studies (O'Toole et al., 1999).

With respect to reporters' characteristics, the inconsistent findings about experience, training and knowledge seem to be replicated in studies that were not included in this recent review. For instance, a study based on 116 school counsellors found that newer professionals felt better trained

to report but years of experience increased self-perceived efficacy in this sense (Kenny & McEachern, 2002). Another research performed with 216 pre-school teachers in their first year of studies found that the knowledge about policies, procedures and legislative frameworks to report were lower than 50% (McKee & Dillenburg, 2009). However, the actual effect that knowledge, experience, training or self-perceived efficacy may have on actual reporting behavior still remains unclear. Some studies (e.g., Kenny & Abreu, 2016) report increased knowledge after training, but the effect of this higher level of knowledge on the actual reporting behavior was not tested. Others (e.g., Bibou-Nakou & Markos, 2017; Haj-Yahia & Attar-Schwartz, 2008) measure the effect of awareness in the willingness to report, but not in the actual behavior. An interesting study (Hawkins & McCallum, 2001) that grouped 141 school personnel according to their training (i.e., no training, old training and recent training) found a mismatch between the level of evidence required by law to report and the level of participants' expectancy to satisfy their own personal need for confidence to do it, which persisted after any kind of training. This reluctance to report can be contraposed to what several studies found in terms of experience (Schols et al., 2013; Toros & Tiirik, 2016; Walsh et al., 2012). Across these studies, school staff members who actually did at least one report tend to show increased knowledge about the procedure and are more likely to report again in the future.

Finally, some works provide proposals to improve early reporting from school. A multidisciplinary study using grounded theory approach collected data about 21 professionals involved in child protection and compared the mandated report to a sort of race in which each of the stakeholders involved wants to "pass" the responsibility to other actors as soon as possible (Feng et al., 2010). The study concludes that the system should encourage more collaboration among different disciplines. This need for better communication among agencies, especially between school and child protection services, has also been found in a review (Bunting & Lazenbatt, 2010) and a recent qualitative study interviewing the designated liaison person (DLP) from 16 schools (Nohilly, 2019). Some studies claim the need for training in specific aspects of the report, such as the steps to take or whom to talk to in the first place (Alvarez et al., 2004). Studies agree that protocols to report from school should be clear and regularly updated (Turner et al., 2017), all personnel must be aware of its content and should be available at all times (Mathews et al., 2008). Recent studies also include the analysis of what may elicit disclosures, highlighting the importance of the interaction between school, families and peers (Fehler-Cabral & Campbell, 2013).

1.2. Contextualization

1.2.1. Victimology in Spain

In Spain, where this research took place, victimology has encountered several challenges in this context. First of all, most studies have been performed at the level of each autonomous

community, which makes it hard to report reliable rates at national levels (Fernández del Valle & Bravo, 2002). In an effort to overcome the several limitations of the system previously highlighted, the website <http://www.infanciaendatos.es> shares the latest data available about children's indicators. As shown in Table 3, data come from different sources, with different instruments and in different timeframes, which makes quite challenging to sum up data about how many children are in risk in Spain.

Table 3. Children at risk in Spain based on the data merged in the website Infancia en Datos.

Violence	Year	Source	<i>n</i>
Peer violence	2014	Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC)	4820
Family violence	2018	Ministerio del Interior - Portal Estadístico de Criminalidad	6532
Ciber-crime	2018	Ministerio del Interior - Portal Estadístico de Criminalidad	2319
Sexual crimes	2018	Ministerio del Interior - Portal Estadístico de Criminalidad	5382
Children in contact with Child Protection Services	2017	Sistema de Información de Usuarios de Servicios Sociales (S.I.U.S.S.)	505224

The challenge of establishing a national rate of this phenomenon is also reflected in epidemiological studies. Research that aimed to estimate prevalence or incidence based on official sources, like the Child Protection Cases files (Saldaña et al., 1995) or cases reported to Child Protection Services find victimization rates as low as 2% (Centro Reina Sofía, 2011; Inglès i Prats, 2000). On the other hand, studies directly asking to children about experiences of violence report rates over 83% in community samples (Pereda et al., 2014). Even higher rates are reported in at-risk samples (Pereda et al., 2017; Segura et al., 2015). In the middle of this long gap are usually statistics coming from NGOs (Fundació Vicki Bernadet, 2019; Fundación ANAR, 2016), which reflect users' characteristics rather than a national description of the issue.

The scientific interest in violence against children in our country seems to be quite recent, as the earliest study included in a review of Spanish research about children and youth victimization based on self-reports dated from the year 1994 (Pereda et al., 2014). However, the tendency to develop research addressing this kind of experience and directly asking to children and youth is increasing in Spanish speaking countries (Santamaría Galeano & Tapia Varas, 2018). Another important point is that over 73% of Spanish studies up to 2010 were focused on peer victimization,

whereas caregiver victimization was one of the less studied types of violence (Pereda et al., 2014). Since then, research addressing this type of violence has increased, although with a slight decrease in recent years (Santamaría Galeano & Tapia Varas, 2018). However there is still a majority of studies focusing only in one type of violence, rather than consider the accumulation of experiences or poly-victimization (Pereda et al., 2014).

Despite all these gaps and limitations, recent research directly asking children and using an instrument that allows for international comparison and to account for the accumulation of different experiences of violence has been growing (García & Ochotorena, 2017; Játiva & Cerezo, 2014; Pereda et al., 2014). Hopefully, this tendency will continue so that Spain can base its actions and interventions in empirically based in results that actually describe its reality.

1.2.2. Education in Spain

Figure 4 briefly described the educational system in which this thesis is framed.

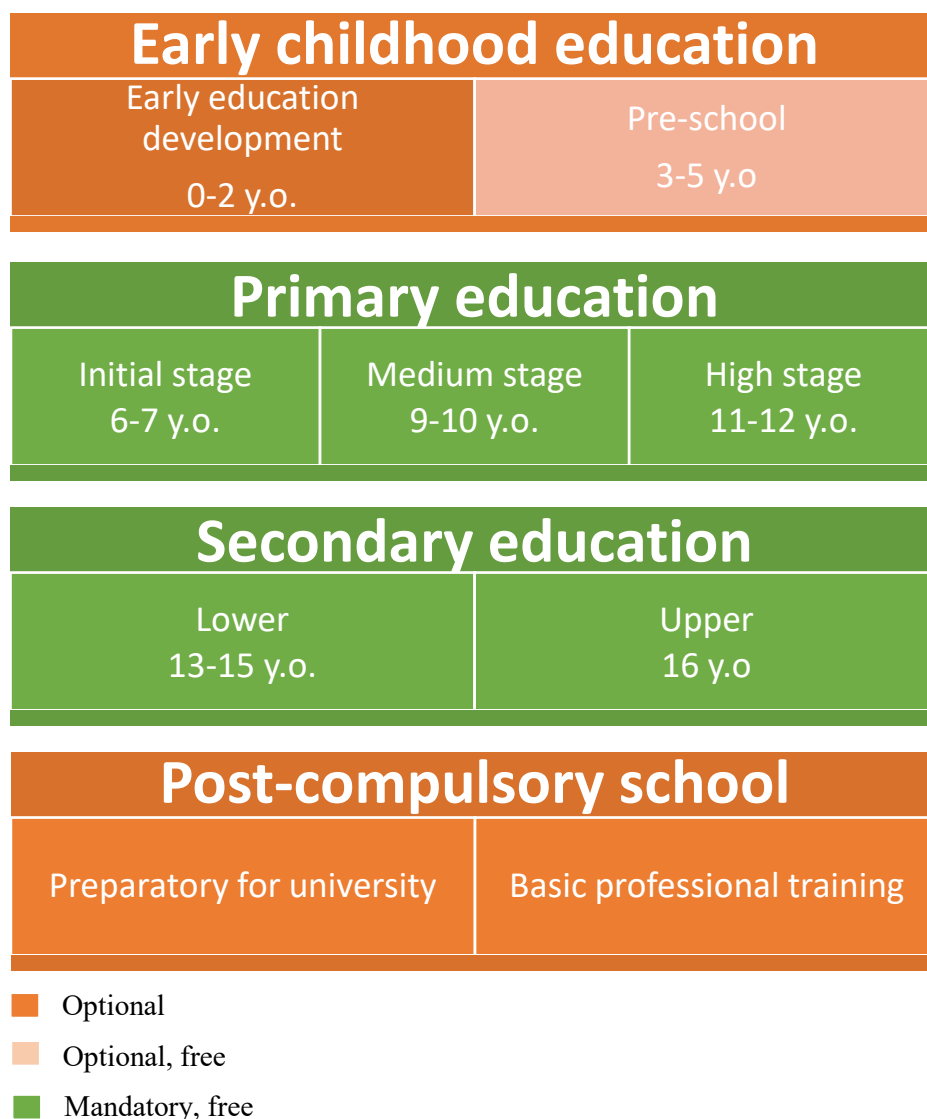


Figure 4. Spanish educational system.

According to the Eurostat database (European Commission, 2021), only 27.7% of children under 2 years old are enrolled in early childhood development, but this percentage increases to 61.4% (OECD, 2020) for children aged 2 years old. From 3 years old until finishing primary school (12 years old), the percentage of enrollment is over 96%, as in most OECD countries. Regarding post-compulsory education, 88.6% of the population between 16 and 18 years old were enrolled in some kind of post-compulsory training. Over around 55% out of them were enrolled in some kind of professional training (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2020).

A particularity of the Spanish educational system is that the central government and the autonomous communities have different competencies. While the central government is in charge of regulating the expedition of qualifications and to warrant the right to education for every citizen, the government of each of the 17 autonomous communities are in charge of the educational system from the pre-school to the university (Aragón Reyes, 2013). This makes a very heterogeneous offer per region, with different number of available vacancies, content and working conditions. The diversity among autonomous communities also implies that child protection services responding to violence against children and youth differ substantially among regions (Pascual-Lavilla, 2020), which makes it even more complicated. This is also shown in the results of studies addressing training, knowledge, and interventions of school staff members regarding violence against children in different regions in Spain.

In the region in which this research took place, Catalonia, 94.8% of children aged 3 years old are enrolled in school, with 64.6% of them going to public schools¹. The rest of the students are enrolled in either a semi-private school (schools that receive funds from the government but in which families also pay monthly) or a private school (which only receive as funding the monthly payment of the families). Specifically, within the province of Barcelona, only 44% of schools are public². In Barcelona city, the proportion of public and semi-private schools are quite even, with only 2.7% of schools being fully private³.

1.2.3. Victimology within schools in Spain

As previously mentioned, the diversity in the autonomous communities that compose the kingdom of Spain is also reflected in the studies that are performed within this country. Most studies use samples coming exclusively from an autonomous region, which makes it hard to extract general conclusions applicable to the whole population. Table 4 shows the studies about

¹ Based on data from the Catalan Institute of Statistics (information available at <https://www.idescat.cat/indicadors/?id=anuals&n=10369&lang=es&tema=educa>)

² According to the Catalan Institute of Statistics (information available at <https://www.idescat.cat/pub/?id=acc&n=735&lang=es>)

³ Following data from the Educational Consortium of Barcelona, https://www.edubcn.cat/ca/el_consorci

the children and youth victimization from a school staff perspective based on the autonomous regions from which the samples have been gathered.

Table 4. Studies in Spain assessing school staff members' knowledge or interventions regarding children and youth victimization.

Authors	Title	Region	<i>n</i>
Benítez Muñoz, Fernández, & Berbén (2005)	Knowledge and attitudes of maltreatment among students (bullying) of future pre-school, primary and high-school teachers ^a	Seville, Andalusia	373
Ceballos, Correa, Rodríguez, & Rodríguez (2007)	An exploratory study of the knowledge of pre-school and primary school teachers to identify child maltreatment from school ^a	Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Canarias	35
Cerezo & Pons-Salvador (2004)	Improving child maltreatment detection systems: a large-scale case study involving health, social services, and school professionals	Balearic Islands	250
Liébana Checa, Deu del Olmo, & Real Martínez (2015)	Ceutan school teachers and their knowledge of child abuse: A knowledge assessment	Ceuta (autonomous city)	122
Márquez-flores, Márquez-Hernández, & Granados-Gámez (2017)	Teachers' knowledge and beliefs about child sexual abuse	Malaga, Andalusia	450

Priegue & Cambeiro (2016)	The knowledge of child abuse of future professionals in education: An exploratory study	Santiago de Compostela, Galicia	24
Jiménez et al. (2016)	Project: A network response. Child sexual abuse and other forms of child maltreatment. The view of the schools in Alcalá de Henares ^a	Alcala de Henares, Madrid	420
(Romero Moreno et al., 2019)	Detection and report of child maltreatment: A study with primary and pre-school teachers ^a	Cadiz, Andalusia	26
Rúa Fontarigo, Pérez-Lahoz, & González-Rodríguez (2018)	Child sexual abuse: the opinion of professionals in educational contexts	Different cities in Galicia	44
Sainz et al., 2020	Knowledge of Child Abuse among Trainee Teachers and Teachers in Service in Spain	Madrid	224
Vila, Greco, Loinaz, & Pereda (2019)	Spanish teachers face child abuse. A pilot study on variables influencing the detection of children at risk	A small city in Catalonia	79

Note. ^a Title translated by the author of this thesis.

As it can be seen, studies vary widely in terms of sample size (ranging from 35 to 450) and design (e.g., knowledge and attitudes assessment, the effect of projects and interventions).

Besides, no studies have been found for over half of the autonomous communities. In addition, most studies focus on one specific type of violence or merge different types of professionals beyond the school context. Many other works summing up findings of previous studies or providing guidelines to address the suspicion or disclosure of children or youth victimization from school are found across different Spanish regions (Nocito Muñoz, 2017; Pérez de Albéniz Iturriaga et al., 2011; Torío López, 2007). A study addressing the effect of positive relationship between students and teachers when adolescents are dealing with bullying was also found in the autonomous community of Aragon (Cortés-Pascual et al., 2020). There are also research that merge professional's views from different Spanish-speaking regions (Ortega et al., 2012). But, in sum no empirical study has nationally assessed this phenomenon. It is worth noticing, however, that new thesis on the subject have been included in shared universities repositories (Arranz Montull, 2018; Arroyo Campo, 2013; Ávila Fernández, 2013), showing that this issue is still relevant and rises interests among young researchers.

However, most local studies report findings that are consistent with international research. Over half of professionals declared that they have never been specifically trained (Márquez-Flores et al., 2016; Sainz et al., 2020), as in studies conducted abroad (AlBuhairan et al., 2011; Toros & Tiirik, 2016). Low levels of knowledge are reported in almost every study (Benítez Muñoz et al., 2005; Priegue & Cambeiro, 2016; Vila et al., 2019), with gaps that seem particularly relevant to report, like specific steps to follow when a referral outside school needs to be made (Liébana Checa et al., 2015; Romero Moreno et al., 2019; Sainz et al., 2020). A significant proportion have detected potential victimization cases during their professional experience -around 40% in Jiménez (2005), 25% in Vila et al. (2019) and 13.2% in Sainz et al (2020)-, but they tended to report only within school settings (Sainz et al., 2020; Vila et al., 2019), although reports outside the school could be increased after training (Cerezo & Pons-Salvador, 2004).

It is worth noting that both in Spain (art. 13 of the Legal Act 1/96 and modification of the Child Protection Service's Act of 2015) and in Catalonia (art. 100.3 of the Legal Act 14/2010) all professionals and particularly those working in the education field are required to report any situation of possible risk to the correspondent authorities. Nevertheless, the limitation in reporting cited on previously commented studies is also evidenced in Figure 5, which shows the number of reported suspicions of child maltreatment to the social services, according to the statistics provided by the Spanish Ministry of Public Health and Equity Politics in their official bulletins⁴. As it can be seen, the Education sector has always been among the ones with lowest rates of report. A piece of good news is that in these latest years reporting coming from school settings

⁴ All of which are available at <https://observatoriodelainfancia.vpsocial.gob.es/estadisticas/estadisticas/home.htm>

have been increasing, being in the most recent year the second sector to provide reports of potential maltreatment cases.

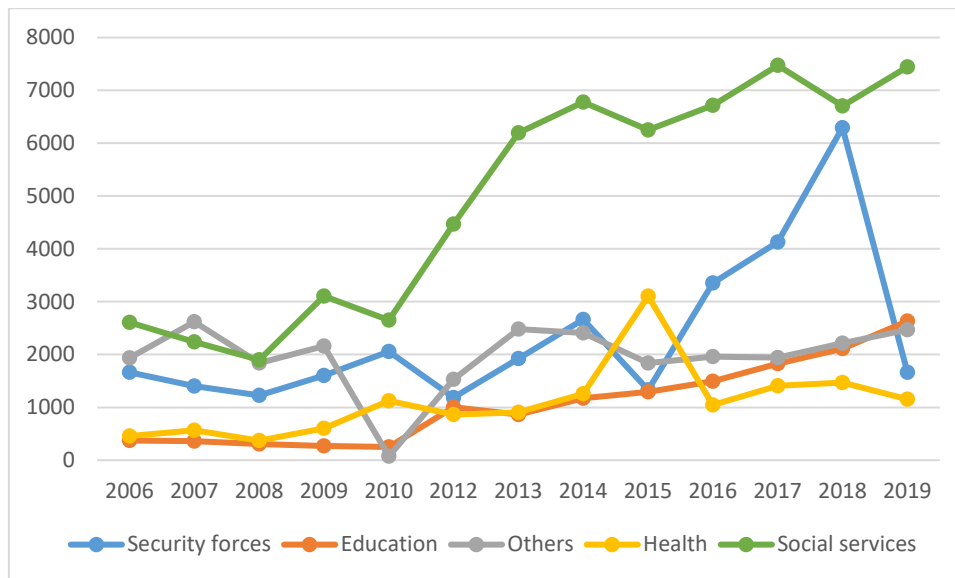


Figure 5. Reports of potential maltreatment cases coming from different sectors according to the Registro Unificado de Maltrato Infantil (RUMI).

1.3. Justification of the current research

National and international research on violence against children and youth has provided large evidence about the huge number of children and adolescents who experience it and the devastating consequences for them but also for their families and society. Many works are increasing their focus on the potential of action that we adults have to prevent children's exposure to violence, but also to act when violence already happened. This is not only a call to all of us to comply with an ethical (and in many regions, legal) duty, but also an opportunity to shift paradigms into a new perspective in which children's well-being is considered a priority and a social responsibility. Within this framework, school seems like an institution whose advantages have not been fully exploited. Adults working in the school context tend to be the first bond for children outside their homes. Besides, the access and time they have with most children place them in a unique position to prevent, detect, report, and intervene in potential victimization cases.

As explained in the previous chapter, most studies conducted within schools has focused on just one type of violence (e.g., Edwards et al., 2020; Svensson et al., 2015). There is probably an overrepresentation of studies addressing violence that occurs within the school context, like bullying (Oldenburg et al., 2016; Gaffney et al., 2019) although many studies also focus exclusively on sexual abuse (Goldman & Grimbeek, 2015; Márquez-Flores et al., 2016; Walsh et al., 2018). Although this approach has been very useful to provide relevant findings that helped improving different types of interventions and targeting particularities of each kind of victimization, the fragmentation may be neglecting the fact that different victimization types tend

to be related (Mitchell et al., 2020; Turner et al., 2016), as has been found by poly-victimization research. The current thesis proposes to consider any type of violence, aiming to discover if such a global perspective can provide meaningful conclusions that adds to the existing evidence.

In addition, studies have exclusively included one type of school workers, like teachers working in different educational levels (Goebbels et al., 2008; Kenny & McEachern, 2002; Svensson et al., 2015; Toros & Tiirik, 2016) or school counselors (Kenny & Abreu, 2016; Lusk et al., 2015; Tillman et al., 2015), lacking an integrative view of every type of school staff members in contact with children. Only a review combined different types of workers (Alazri & Hanna, 2020) and other research included professional from different sectors (Feng et al., 2010; Fryda & Hulme, 2015; Turner et al., 2017), but very few invited to participate different types of school staff members (Edwards et al., 2020; Hawkins & McCallum, 2001; Moon et al., 2017). This may lead to underestimate the potential of unprofessional school staff, such as guardians or school nurses, who have been pointed at as a trustworthy adult for adolescents in previous studies (Cater et al., 2016). The present thesis invited to participate every school staff member in contact with children as a way of complementing the results of previous studies that helped to identify relevant findings in each different type of school worker.

Finally, the present research aims to take a step forward from previous studies by shedding light on inconsistent findings reported by previous studies. Although a huge number of studies described knowledge and attitudes regarding detection and reporting from school (Alvarez et al., 2004; Dinehart et al., 2016) very few have actually empirically tested if these or other variables (such as gender or years of experience) have an effect on the amount of detected cases or the reporting behavior (with the exception of Bibou-Nakou & Markos, 2017; Goebbels et al., 2008). Many publications test this effect through hypothetical situations (e.g., Dinehart et al., 2016; Kenny & Abreu, 2016; Webster et al., 2005), which may compromise the ecological validity of the results (Kihlstrom, 2021). Other studies are designed to analyze the consequences of an intervention, mainly training (e.g., Cerezo & Pons-Salvador, 2004; Mathews et al., 2017). The present thesis aimed to capture school staff members' self-reported actual behavior and experience regarding the detection and reporting of potential victimization in order to describe the phenomenon as it is currently taking place in schools of Barcelona city.

In sum, this thesis represents a call to every adult working on everyday basis in contact with children and youth within the school framework to be sensitive towards any type of violent incident that may affect their development and well-being. It is expected that through the proposed particularities of the current research, our understanding of the potential that school has in terms of child protection will be broaden and strengthen. It is also hoped that the studies composing this thesis will provide information about concrete practical effects of the studied variables in the detection and reporting of potential victimization cases, in order to reinforce these duties among school staff members.

1.4. Aims and hypotheses

The aim of the present thesis is to study the knowledge and experience of school staff members regarding children and youth victimization, its detection and its reporting. More specifically, we wanted to quantify how many suspicions across their experience do school staff members commonly find and report outside school. We also propose to find out which variables can influence this process.

Each of the studies that compose the current thesis focus on the following aspects:

- The first study describes the experience and level of knowledge reported by school staff from Barcelona, assessing the approximate number of suspected cases, and the proportion of these cases that are reported outside school. It also analyzes which variables may influence the decision to report a case beyond the school framework.
- The second study focused more specifically on the role of the level of knowledge that school staff members from Barcelona present on victimization, its detection and its reporting, assessing if it has an effect over other variables on the experience of having suspected a case and on the behavior regarding the reporting of these suspicions.
- The third study quantifies once more the proportion of suspected cases that are reported outside the school context among school staff members from Barcelona and Santander. Having found several challenges in terms of reporting, this study also focuses on the reasons given by the school staff members that suspected at least once to decide not to report the case outside school.

A summary of the aims, research questions and hypotheses guiding each of these studies is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of studies aims, research questions, hypotheses, and findings.

Study number and title	Aim	Research question	Hypotheses	Main contributions
1. School staff members experience and knowledge in the reporting of potential child and youth victimization	To describe school staff members' knowledge, experience, and behavior regarding childhood and youth victimization, its early detection and the reporting of suspected cases in Spain.	What is the experience school staff have regarding children and youth victimization, its detection and its reporting? What do school staff know about victimization, its detection and its reporting? How does this knowledge and experience affect the way they behave?	Most suspected instances are not reported The under-reporting is related to a lack of knowledge and professional experience	Describe the frequency of the suspicions and the proportion of unreported suspicions. Provide empirical evidence of variables influencing the tendency not to report suspicions.
2. Detection and reporting potential child and youth victimization cases from school: The role of knowledge	To analyze the relationship between school staff members' level of knowledge and their experience of detecting and reporting children victimization. To compare	Does the level of knowledge vary between school staff classified as non-detectors, inconsistent-reporters or consistent reporters? Is the level of knowledge relevant to predict a staff member's classification as a non-detector, inconsistent reporter or consistent reporter, when controlling for the effect of other variables?	We expect to find higher levels of knowledge among consistent reporters (Dinehart & Kenny, 2015; Hurtado et al., 2013; Webster et al., 2005). Some variables aside from the level of knowledge, like training	A deeper understanding of the power or limitations of knowledge effect in the recognition of potential cases the decision to contact external sources of support.

Study number and title	Aim	Research question	Hypotheses	Main contributions
	this effect of knowledge with the potential influence of other reporters' characteristics.		(Mathews et al., 2017) or self-confidence (Feng et al., 2010; Goebbels et al., 2008) might predict the experience of detection and reporting more strongly than knowledge.	
3. Why do school staff sometimes fail to report potential victimization cases? A mixed-methods study	To re-assess the proportion of detected and reported suspicions in a larger sample To study the reasons that school staff give to explain their behavior when choosing not to report a potential case to an agency outside school.	What are the main reasons given by school staff not to report potential victimization cases outside school? Does the level of knowledge differs across respondents with different reasons for not reporting their suspicions? Does other characteristics, such as gender or years of work experience, have any influence on the reasons given for lack of reporting?	Most suspicions would not be reported outside school. Reasons not to report might converge with previous studies (Alazri & Hannah, 2020, Falkiner et al., 2017) but we also expect to discover new ones that might have been neglected because of the method used to address this question.	Apply a mixed-methods approach to a sensitive issue that had not been previously analyzed through this perspective. Provide detail of what can happen to a suspicion when shared within the school framework.

1.5. Timeline

The following Gant chart is provided to illustrate the development of the whole project.

Table 6. Gant chart.

Year	2015 ^a	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Design and pre-test of the instrument	■						
Data collection in Barcelona		■					
Analysis first study		■					
Publication study1			■				
Analysis study 2			■				
Data collection in Santander				■			
Publication study 2				■	■		
Analysis study 3					■		
Publication study 3						■	
Thesis presentation							■

Note. Some tasks, like literature search and update and congresses presentations were performed at several points, according to the project's progress.

^a From September, when this project started as master thesis.

2. Studies

2.1. Study 1: School staff members experience and knowledge in the reporting of potential child and youth victimization

This study has been published as: Greco, A.M., Guilera, G., & Pereda, N. (2017). School staff members experience and knowledge in the reporting of potential child and youth victimization. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 72, 22-31. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.07.004>

Authors' information:

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Journal metrics

JCR 2017 Impact Factor: 2.899

Rank: Q1 Family studies; Q1 Psychology, Social; Q1 Social Work

2.1.1. Abstract

Victimization has been widely demonstrated to have negative consequences in minors. Most crimes against children go unreported and victims tend to reach adulthood without receiving any of the available specialized support. Studies have highlighted the unique role of school workers in early detection and reporting of possible cases of victimization, and have also found high rates of underreporting by school staff. The present study analyzes the underreporting of child and youth victimization suspicions among school staff and aims to identify variables related to its detection and reporting. One hundred and eighty-four school staff members (83.7% females, $M = 42.6$ years old, $SD = 11.7$) from 17 different schools completed a self-administered questionnaire designed to record their knowledge and experience regarding the detection and reporting of potential victimization cases. Over 74% of the school workers had suspected at least one situation of victimization during their careers, but only 27% had actually reported these concerns. Higher rates of reporting were significantly associated with male gender, more years of experience, and awareness of five common misconceptions. Reporting behavior could be predicted by gender, years of experience and two statements assessing respondents' knowledge of victimization. In order to increase early reporting of possible cases of victimization, it is necessary to overcome certain misconceptions, raise awareness among school staff, design new training programs or interventions, and adapt the school dynamics in the light of these findings.

Key Words: Victimization; Detection; Report; School.

2.1.2. Introduction

Childhood and youth victimization has been widely demonstrated to affect victims' social and psychological development over their lifespan. Early detection and reporting is crucial in order to provide victims with support as soon as possible and thus to reduce the negative consequences (Winkel, Wohlfarth, & Blaauw, 2003). Although approximately ten million children are estimated to be suffering different forms of maltreatment in Europe, only 10-20% of these cases come to light (World Health Organization, 2013). Unreported crime against children is particularly high (Webster, O'Toole, O'Toole, & Lucal, 2005) even when adults close to them are aware of the situation (Finkelhor, Wolak, & Berliner, 2008). Once reported, only around 22% of cases receive professional attention (Cater, Andershed, & Andershed, 2016); as a result, most victims reach adulthood without having received any of the available specialized support, such as child welfare, health or security services (Finkelhor, et al, 2008).

Meta-analyses such as the one by Stoltenborgh, Bakermans-Kranenburg, Alink, & van Ijzendoorn (2015) have highlighted the challenges facing researchers who try to determine the true prevalence of children and youth victimization. Studies that have directly asked children and adolescents about their victimization experiences (such as Cyr et al. (2013) in Canada, Finkelhor (2011) in the United States; Radford, Corral, Bradley, & Fisher (2013) in the UK; and Pereda, Guilera, & Abad (2014) in Spain) have found higher rates than those published in official reports, demonstrating that the real extent of child and youth victimization remains unknown and uncertain and can only be estimated approximately (Hillis et al., 2016a).

Authors like Finkelhor (2011) have highlighted the need to reduce the gap between the cases identified by the system and the real prevalence in order to be able to provide adequate support for the victims who are currently neglected. To do this, early detection is a key factor; the role of school staff members is crucial since they interact with almost all the children in the population on a daily basis (Schols, de Ruiters, & Ory, 2013). This fact maximizes the importance of identifying the possible signs of being a victim, such as poor school achievement (Fantuzzo, et al., 2011), less security and closeness towards peers and adults, and conflictual friendships (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011). Another feature of the key role that school staff members play is the fact that they have regular access to children's families and circles (e.g., peers, other caregivers, and so on).

Several international studies (Dinehart & Kenny, 2015; Haj-Yahia & Attar-Schwartz, 2008; Kenny, 2001; Schols et al., 2013; Toros & Tiirik, 2014) have analyzed the behavior of different types of school staff members (e.g., early caregivers, educators, pre-elementary school teachers, elementary school teachers, special education teachers, psychologists) and have found that early detection and the reporting possible cases of victimization depend largely on these

workers' knowledge, attitudes and professionalism. Training also appears to be particularly important (Kenny, 2004; Walsh, Bridgstock, Farrell, Rassafiani, & Schweitzer, 2008).

Unfortunately, as previous studies have noted (Crenshaw, Crenshaw, & Lichtenberg, 1995; Finkelhor, Wolak, & Berliner, 2001; Kenny, 2004), most of the people working in the educational setting lack the knowledge or personal motivation to extend their teaching role to include the monitoring of children and young people's rights. Researchers have identified a number of common barriers to detecting and reporting possible victimization cases: an inability to recognize the signs (Kenny, 2001), a fear of misinterpreting families' educational practices (Toros & Tiirik, 2014), a lack of awareness of the workings of child welfare systems, a lack of familiarity with their legal duties or with reporting procedures (Cater et al, 2016; Kenny, 2004; Walsh et al., 2008), bad experiences with reporting to institutions (e.g., child welfare services, police), a lack of faith in the child welfare system (Schols et al., 2013) and fears of embarrassment or possible retaliations (Alvarez, Kenny, Donohue, & Carpin, 2004). Schools in particular are reluctant to report suspicious cases of victimization because of concerns about their reputation (Finkelhor et al., 2008). Additionally, vague definitions of different types of the phenomenon (Kenny, 2001) and the fact that school staff members tend to make their reports inside the same institution rather than directly to experts or authorities make it even harder to raise their awareness of this professional obligation. Finally, the fact that most members of staff are unaware of the possible legal consequences of failing to report a suspected case has also been identified as an associated factor (Dinehart & Kenny, 2015).

In Spain, studies from different regions have reported alarming results regarding the detection and reporting of suspicious child abuse cases in schools (Prieto Jiménez, 2005). Liébana, del Olmo, and Real (2015) drew attention to the lack of knowledge regarding child abuse among teachers and called for further analyses to measure the factors that can contribute to develop efficient detection. This was also reported by studies focused only on one type of victimization, such as sexual abuse (e.g., Márquez-Flores et al., 2016). Similar findings have been reported in studies performed with psychology (Pereda et al., 2012) and pedagogy students (Priegue & Cambrielo, 2016). But in spite of the fact that training can significantly improve detection and reporting among professionals (Cerezo & Pons, 2004) and disclosure in minors (López & Del Campo, 2006) schools are not currently developing their potential for providing support for neglected victims.

Purpose of the Present Study

If we aim to protect child and youth victims from violence and to prevent its consequences, early detection and reporting of possible cases of victimization is crucial. School staff members have an important role to play in this respect. The Spanish school system offers several advantages with regard to detecting and reporting different kinds of victimization; schooling is mandatory in Spain between the ages of 6 and 16, in accordance with the *Ley*

Orgánica de Educación of 2006 [Education Act 1/2006] which guarantees access to education. Reporting any suspicion of a potential case of victimization is also mandatory according to the *Ley Orgánica de Protección Jurídica del menor* of 1996 [1/1996, Minors' Legal Protection Act]). Legislation is believed to increase reporting (see Mathews & Kenny (2008) for a review of reporting in regions with and without mandatory reporting).

The main aim of the present study is to examine school staff members' knowledge, experience, and behavior regarding childhood and youth victimization, its early detection and the reporting of suspected cases in Spain. We take a step forward from previous studies (Dinehart & Kenny, 2015; Liébana et al., 2015) in trying to explain the tendency not to report suspicions, which has already been observed in previous studies both in Spain (e.g., Prieto Jiménez, 2005) and abroad (e.g., Webster et al., 2005). We hypothesize that most suspected instances are not reported; we propose that this behavior is related to a lack of knowledge and professional experience and we analyze variables involved in it (Kenny, 2001, 2004; Walsh, Mathews, Rassa, Farrell, & Butler, 2012). We hope that the study will provide conclusions that may help to increase the early detection and reporting of possible cases of victimization.

2.1.3. Method

Participants

The participants were school employees at 17 schools in the city of Barcelona in the north-east of Spain. Schools were stratified by district and type of school (i.e., publicly funded, private, or subsidized). Then, a one-stage cluster sampling was used. Specifically, schools within districts were randomly selected, maintaining proportionality in terms of the type and amount of schools per district. A total of 38 schools were invited to participate, of which 45% accepted. The total study sample comprised 184 school employees, 83.7% females ($M = 42.6$ years old, $SD = 11.7$) with a mean of 19 years of experience ($SD = 10.6$). The distribution of participants according to district and type of school is shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Sample characteristics.

Variable	Male		Female		Total ^a	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Type ^b						
Publicly-funded	9	32.1	73	47.4	83	45.1
Subsidized	19	67.9	81	52.6	100	54.9
Role ^c						
Principals ^d	4	13.8	18	11.9	22	12.0
Teachers	9	31.0	70	46.4	79	43.1
Professors ^e	7	24.1	22	14.6	29	15.8

					Study #1	
Special Education Teachers	1	3.5	8	5.3	9	4.9
Psychologists	0	0	2	1.3	2	1.0
Monitors ^f	5	17.3	14	9.3	19	10.3
More than one role	3	10.3	13	8.6	16	8.7
Others ^g	0	0	4	2.6	4	2.1
Level ^c						
Preschool	1	3.8	31	20.1	32	17.4
Elementary school	13	50.0	76	49.4	89	48.6
High School ^g	8	30.8	19	12.3	27	14.7
More than one	4	15.4	26	16.9	30	16.3
All levels	0	0	2	1.3	2	1.0

^a One case was excluded because gender was missed.

^b No private schools agreed to participate; private schools represent less than 3% of the total in Barcelona. One missing case was excluded.

^c For some demographics, the sample does not add up to 184 due to missing data.

^d Including academic coordinators.

^e Including music, foreign language and special arts teachers employed by hours at different levels.

^f In Spain, monitors look after children during their lunch time, breaks and other activities.

^g Including members of school administration, roles with less direct contact with children (i.e., secretary, cook).

^h From 12/13 to 17/18 years of age.

Procedure

All procedures were conducted in accordance with the basic ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki in Seoul (World Medical Assembly, 2008) and respecting the ethical standards drawn up by our university's Committee on Bioethics.

A reference person at each school (i.e., principals, academic coordinators, deans) was contacted by phone in February 2016 in order to explain the aim and procedure of the study. It was clearly stated that collaboration was voluntary and that all the data compiled would remain confidential, respecting the *Ley Orgánica de Protección de Datos* [15/1999, Data Protection Act]. In return for their collaboration, referents were offered a personalized analysis of their school's results and a one-hour training session on childhood and youth victimization for all staff members.

Once they gave their consent, the referent was asked to invite every school staff member who came into contact with children to participate. All participants received a brief written invitation explaining the study's aims and all gave their written consent when filling in the forms. The information was provided in the participant's language of choice (i.e., Catalan or Spanish) in either an on-line or printed version. The respondents answering in Catalan or Spanish version of

the questionnaire did not differ significantly with regard to gender, age and years of work experience, nor in the choice of the printed or on-line version of the instrument.

Timeframes were agreed for delivering and collecting the questionnaires (in the case of the printed version) and the deadline for submission was established (in the case of the on-line version). Techniques like personalization, pre-notification, and reminders (Fowler & Consenza, 2008) were used to overcome potential non-responses. Schools' referents and all staff members were provided with a contact phone-line and e-mail address to clarify any doubts or to announce that they wished to abandon participation.

After data collection and analysis, a report presenting the results was sent to each school, between May and June 2016. Training sessions were also delivered during this period.

Measures

Based on previous studies with similar aims both in Spain (Cerezo & Pons, 2004; Liébana et al., 2015, López & Del Campo, 2006) and abroad (Kenny, 2001; Walsh et al., 2008, 2012), and drawing on current official conventions and protocols (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2007; Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, 2006), a self-administered questionnaire was designed and pre-tested. Methodological guidelines (deLeeuw, Hox, & Dillman, 2008) were also considered.

The first section of the instrument dealt with sociodemographic and professional information, including the respondent's gender, age, school where they worked, role at the school and years of experience working with minors. The questionnaire also included three modules to record previous experience and knowledge regarding victimization, detection and reporting. For victimization, experience was addressed through three questions (e.g., "Have you received any training regarding child victimization?") and knowledge through ten statements that participants must answer with "Yes/No/I don't know", focused on victimization itself (e.g., "Victimization affects less than 10% of children in Spain"). For detection of possible cases, previous experience was addressed with direct questions (e.g., "How many times during your career did you suspect that a minor might be being victimized?") and knowledge through 10 statements referring to detection (e.g., "Most of the signs regarding child abuse are directly observable"). For the reporting of suspicions, experience was addressed by direct questions (e.g., "How many times did you report a child abuse suspicion?") and knowledge through 10 statements concerning reporting procedures (e.g. "Reporting a suspicion is mandatory in Spain").

Additional information regarding the pre-testing of the questionnaire is available in Appendix 2.

Data Analysis

Percentages of endorsement were obtained for the distributions of responses to the questions (i.e., experience) and the statements (i.e., knowledge), excluding missing cases for each item. These rates were compared to detection (suspected cases) and reporting rates (suspicions

reported) using the chi-square test to analyze whether the relationships were significant. Cramer's V effect size measure and point biserial correlations were used to explore the magnitude of significant bivariate associations.

Reporting behavior was analyzed only in school staff members who had had at least one suspicion during their career ($n = 134$) as a binary outcome (i.e., had/had not reported the suspicion/s). In order to analyze the hypothesized underreporting of suspected cases, the McNemar test with continuity correction was performed to compare the number of suspicions with the number of reports. A stepwise backward logistic regression was performed, using the likelihood ratio method, to find possible predictors of reporting behavior. In this model we included as predictors only the variables that were found to be relevant through V (i.e., $V \sim .20$) or r coefficients (i.e., $r_{pb} \geq .20$).

Multicollinearity was checked through variance inflation factors (VIF) and independence of errors through the Durbin-Watson test; the assumptions were met in both cases.

Analyses were performed in R 3.3.1 (R Core Team, 2015).

2.1.4. Results

Question/Statement Descriptive Statistics

Experience. Percentages of endorsement for questions that addressed victimization, detection and reporting experiences are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Percentage of endorsement for questions on previous experience.

Questions	Yes		No		I don't know/I am not sure	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Victimization						
Aware of the concept of child and youth “victimization”	97	53.3	52	28.6	33	18.1
Has received training	20	10.9	159	86.4	5	2.7
Detection						
Has had at least one suspicion during his/her career	134	72.8	27	14.7	23	12.5
Considers to acknowledge risk factors in minors	34	18.9	33	18.3	113	62.8
Considers to acknowledge risk factors in families	22	12.3	48	26.8	109	60.9
Identifies a reference point in his/her school	104	57.8	32	17.8	44	24.4
Reporting						
Has reported at least one suspicion ^a	37	27.6	94	70.1	3	2.3
States that there is a protocol for reporting at his/her school ^b	44	28.2	20	12.8	92	59.0

Note. The total number of responses within the table differs as a result of missing data. Percentages were obtained excluding missing cases for each item.

^a Only participants who had had suspicions were included ($n = 134$).

^b Item with a non-response rate above 15%.

More than half of the staff members in the sample stated that they were familiar with the concept of child victimization, although the majority reported not having been trained in this area. Of the ones that were trained ($n = 20$), around 38% reported having been trained in public institutions, 33% at university, 14% at their current place of work, 9% in private centers and 4% at NGOs.

Around 60% of the sample said that they did not know if they could identify the necessary risk factors (either in minors or in families) in order to define possible victimization cases. Excluding two missing responses, almost two thirds of 182 participants stated that they had suspected at least one case of victimization during their career, but only a few (around 27%) had ever reported these concerns to professional institutions outside the school; most (93%) had made their reports to child welfare services and stated that the principal had participated in the report (95%). Finally, 80% of the participants who had made reports of suspicions had followed up one or all of the cases ($n = 33$). Of these, 68% considered that most cases improved after being reported to the child welfare services.

The majority of participants mentioned the presence of a person of reference at the school, usually the school's psychologist (48%) or less frequently the principal (28%). Only 44 participants reported knowing whether there was a protocol to guide potential reporting at their school.

Knowledge. Percentages of endorsement for statements measuring knowledge in each module (i.e., victimization, detection and reporting) are shown in Tables 9, 10 and 11. Correct answer is shown in parentheses after each item.

Table 9. Percentages of endorsement per statement about knowledge. Victimization module.

Victimization statements	Yes		No		I don't know	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Child victimization can affect the minor's neurological development (Yes)	171	95.0	1	0.6	8	4.4
A minor who has suffered victimization is more likely to develop depression as an adult (Yes)	135	76.3	6	3.4	36	20.3
Minors and adults are equally vulnerable to violence (No)	105	59.0	71	39.9	2	1.1
If a behavior is harmful to the minor we consider it victimization, regardless of its intention (No)	131	73.2	17	9.5	31	17.3
We only consider victimization in a situation in which the minor's physical health is in immediate danger (No)	22	12.5	138	78.9	15	8.6
Most parents who victimize their children are mentally or psychologically ill (No)	25	14.3	96	55.2	53	30.5
Child victimization is always an action perpetrated by a grown-up against a minor (No)	32	18.4	126	72.4	16	9.2
Physical maltreatment is the most frequent type of victimization (No)	28	16.2	82	47.4	63	36.4
Child victimization affects less than 10% of minors in Spain (No)	15	8.6	28	16.0	132	75.4
A minor who has been victimized usually develops a feeling of rejection towards the perpetrator (No)	61	34.3	47	26.4	70	39.3

Note. The total number of responses within the table differs as a result of missing data. Percentages were obtained excluding missing cases for each item.

Table 10. Percentages of endorsement. Detection module.

Detection statements	Yes		No		I don't know	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Only if I see more than one sign at a time can I suspect that a minor might be being victimized (Yes)	57	32.9	59	34.2	57	32.9
Protecting minors' well-being is a legal obligation, even if it means getting involved in situations outside the school context (Yes) ^a	98	64.5	12	7.9	42	27.6
The frequency of aggressive behavior is crucial to suspecting whether a minor is being victimized or not (Yes)	79	45.6	47	27.2	47	27.2
A minor growing up in a one-parent family is more likely to experience victimization (Yes)	5	2.9	135	78.0	33	19.1
A minor with low self-esteem is more likely to experience victimization (Yes)	114	64.8	25	14.2	37	21.0
An isolated family is considered more likely to perpetrate victimization (Yes)	56	32.0	34	19.4	85	48.6
Most signs of the childhood victimization are directly observable (No)	24	14.1	110	64.7	36	21.2
If the minor belongs to a culture that is more tolerant regarding abuse, we should not get involved (No)	13	7.6	130	76.0	28	16.4
An isolated family is considered more likely to perpetrate victimization (Yes)	56	32.0	34	19.4	85	48.6
A family that shows excessive protection towards their minors is associated with stronger precaution regarding victimization (No)	24	13.9	98	56.6	51	29.5
It is easy to define whether a behavior can be considered abuse or not (No)	96	55.8	33	19.2	43	25.0

Note. The total number of responses within the table differs as a result of missing data. Percentages were obtained excluding missing cases for each item.

^a Item with over 15% of missing cases.

Table 11. Percentages of endorsement. Reporting module.

	Yes		No		I don't know	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Reporting statements						
In case of mild abuse, the first institution outside the school that should be notified is child welfare services (Yes)	122	67.0	13	7.2	47	25.8
In case of severe abuse, the first institution outside the school that should be notified is the police (No)	37	20.7	72	40.2	70	39.1
We should only report a case if we know for sure that the minor is being victimized (No)	82	45.8	50	27.9	47	26.3
In most cases, child welfare services interventions are not good for the minor's well-being (No)	26	14.7	65	36.7	86	48.6
If the informant wishes to report anonymously, he/she may do so (No)	52	29.7	24	13.7	99	56.6
A report makes a judge aware of the case (No)	25	14.7	32	18.8	113	66.5
If a suspicions turns out not to be true, the family is entitled to sue the informant (No)	26	14.9	12	6.9	136	78.2
Too many reports make the system collapse (No)	27	15.8	51	29.8	93	54.4
Reporting is up to the informant: the person who has the suspicion decides whether to report it (No)	54	30.6	61	34.7	61	34.7
The school principal's consent must be obtained before reporting (No)	70	39.8	31	17.6	75	42.6

Note. The total number of responses within the table differs as a result of missing data. Percentages were obtained excluding missing cases for each item.

In relation to knowledge of victimization (see Table 3), in response to the statement “Child victimization affects less than 10% of minors in Spain,” over two-thirds of the respondents answered “I don’t know”. Two other main misconceptions were identified: more than half of participants considered minors to be equally vulnerable to violence as adults, and many excluded intentionality from the definition of victimization.

With regard to detection (see Table 4), in response to the statement about considering isolation as a risk factor, almost half of the sample responded “I don’t know”. The most salient misconceptions were not acknowledging that a child from a one-parent family is more at risk of being victimized (answered “No” by 78% of the participants) and stating that it is easy to define whether an action constitutes abuse or not (answered “Yes” by around 56%).

The reporting section (see Table 5) was the one with the highest number of statements that elicited an “I don’t know” response. Specifically, more than half of participants responded "I don't know" to items stating that: too many reports make the system collapse, reports could be made anonymously, reports of suspected cases involve a judge, and the family is entitled to sue an informant when a suspicion turns out not to be true. The most salient misconception is that one needs to be certain that victimization is occurring in order to report a suspicion (answered "Yes" by almost 46%).

Bivariate Correlations

Detection. The only variable that was significantly associated with detection (No suspicion/Had at least one suspicion) was years of experience ($r_{pb} = .22, p < .01$). When analyzing detection behavior as a variable with multiple categories (i.e., 0 suspicions, 1 to 10 suspicions, 11 to 20 suspicions, or more than 20), acknowledging risk factors in families also turned out to be statistically significant ($\chi^2(6) = 29.71, p < .0001, V = .30$), indicating that participants who considered themselves to be aware of these factors tended to detect more cases.

Reporting. The McNemar test was statistically significant ($\chi^2(1) = 48.16, p < .0001$), indicating that most of the suspicions remain unreported (i.e., 74% of the 182 participants responding this item had suspected; only 27% of them had ever made a report).

Additionally, associations between reporting of suspicions and other variables of interest (e.g., having received training) were studied in more depth, considering only participants who had had suspicions ($n = 134$). Statistically significant associations were found between reporting victimization suspicions and gender ($\chi^2(1) = 5.49, p < .05$), indicating that males were slightly more likely to report suspicions than females ($V = .19$). There was also a moderate correlation between reporting suspicions and years of experience ($r_{pb} = .24, p < .01$), showing that staff members with more experience were slightly more likely to report.

The statements assessing knowledge that were significantly associated with reporting behavior were: a) “If the minor belongs to a culture that is more tolerant towards maltreatment, we should not intervene” ($\chi^2(2) = 6.39, V = .22, p < .05$); b) “In many cases, the intervention of the child welfare services does not improve the minor’s well-being” ($\chi^2(2) = 14.65, V = .32, p < .001$); c) “If the informant wishes to report anonymously, he/she may do so” ($\chi^2(2) = 15.95, V = .34, p < .001$), d) “Reporting is a voluntary action; it depends on the informant’s willingness” ($\chi^2(2) = 8.5, V = .25, p < .05$); and e) “In order to report, it is necessary to have the principal’s consent” ($\chi^2(2) = 15.66, V = .33, p < .001$).

Logistic Regression

The variables that were found to be relevant (i.e., with a substantial Cramer’s V or r) were used to explain the reporting behavior in a stepwise logistic regression model. The final model displayed in Table 12 shows a Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test of $\chi^2(8) = 3.17, p = .96$. On the one hand, results suggest that for each unit increase in years of experience the likelihood of reporting a suspicion increases by one time, and that males are three times more likely to report suspicions than females. On the other hand, not knowing whether child welfare service interventions are good for the minor tends to decrease the likelihood of reporting suspicions. Finally, acknowledging that one should intervene even when the minor belongs to a culture that is more tolerant towards maltreatment appears to increase the likelihood of reporting potential cases of victimization.

Table 12. Explaining reporting of suspected cases behavior.

Variables	β	z	e^{β}	e^{β} 95% CI	
				2.5%	97.5%
Constant	-2.96*	-2.47	0.05	0.003	0.43
In most cases, child welfare services interventions are mostly bad for the minor’s well-being (reference category: Yes)					
I don’t know	-2.22**	-2.92	0.10	0.02	0.46

No	-1.11	-1.53	0.32	0.07	1.31
Gender (reference category: Female)					
Male	1.19*	2.004	3.31	1.04	11.16
If the minor belongs to a culture that is more tolerant towards maltreatment, we should not intervene (reference category: No) ^a					
I don't know	0.83	0.49	2.29	0.06	88.57
Yes	2.42	1.87	11.29	1.25	280.05
Years of experience	0.07**	3.05	1.08	1.03	1.14

Note. $R^2 = .22$ (Cox & Snell); .21 (McFadden); .32 (Nagelkerke).

Statistical significance is shown by multiple asterisk * $p < .05$ and ** $p < .01$

^a Variable “If the minor belongs to a culture that is more tolerant towards maltreatment, we should not intervene (reference category: No)” reported a significant Likelihood of Ratio Test ($p < .04$)

2.1.5. Discussion

With the aims of upholding child and youth victims' rights and of providing them with support, the present study analyzed school staff members' knowledge and experience to detect possible cases of victimization and report these suspicions to the corresponding authorities. As predicted in our hypothesis and in previous work that have analyzed underreporting (Kenny, 2001; Schols et al, 2013; Webster et al., 2005), most of the suspicions regarding child victimization remain unreported by school staff members. This behavior appears to be associated with a lack of knowledge and previous experience (Cerezo & Pons, 2004; Dinehart & Kenny, 2015; Kenny, 2001, 2004; Walsh et al., 2008), but also with sociodemographic and professional characteristics such as gender or years of experience (Schols et al, 2013; Toros & Tiirik, 2014). The findings, along with recommendations for future research, are discussed in detail below.

Experience of victimization, detection and reporting

Most of the participants had detected possible cases of child victimization, even though they were not certain about their suspicions. In Spain, certainty about child abuse and neglect is not a legal requirement for notifying the authorities; Spanish law tries to encourage individuals to communicate any suspicion regarding child victimization in order to allow further investigation and, if necessary, early intervention.

In agreement with previous studies (Liébana et al., 2015) our analyses suggest that it is crucial to encourage school workers to be more proactive with regard to reporting their suspicions and to highlight the practical implications of reporting procedures, which are completely unknown to most of them (Schols et al, 2013; Toros & Tiirik, 2014; Walsh et al., 2008). In future research, it might also be interesting to collect information about how a suspicious case is defined, and to establish whether this is relevant when it comes to making the decision to report the behavior.

The fear that intervening and reporting a suspicion is likely to have a negative effect on potential victims' lives has a significant influence on the decision to report it, as previous studies have suggested (Alvarez et al., 2004; Kenny, 2004). This reflects one of the most frequent misconceptions regarding child victimization (Finkelhor et al., 2008). Nevertheless, we found consistent evidence (Kenny, 2004) to the contrary, since most of the participants who followed up a reported case stated that they considered the child's well-being to be improved after child welfare services interventions. Due to the small amount of school staff members with reporting experience, this aspect should be further explored.

Knowledge of victimization, detection and reporting

Although half of the participants reported familiarity with the concept of child and youth victimization, more than 80% said that they had not received any specific training regarding this issue. In view of the effect of training reported by previous studies in Spain (Cerezo & Pons, 2004; López & Del Campo, 2006), and in other countries (Kenny, 2004; Walsh et al., 2008) a number of important points should be borne in mind with regard to the design of future training in schools. Staff stated that they were unaware of the magnitude of child victimization and of the signs that would help to detect it (e.g., not knowing whether an isolated child or a one-parent family is more at risk) and expressed misconceptions (e.g., assuming that minors and adults were equally vulnerable, not considering the intention or the frequency to define victimization, and so on). These findings are consistent with those of previous studies (Dinehart & Kenny, 2015; Kenny, 2001; Prieto Jiménez, 2005; Schols et al, 2013) which highlighted this lack of knowledge as a barrier to detecting and reporting possible cases of victimization.

The most important gray area seems to be in the reporting procedures. Some of the strongest barriers have already been noted by other authors, such as misconceptions regarding the professionals

(e.g., judges, police, social workers, psychologists) who are involved in the procedure (Cater et al., 2016; Dinehart & Kenny, 2015), the informants' rights and responsibilities, and the information that needs to be reported (Toros & Tiirik, 2014; Walsh et al., 2008). Mistrust of the welfare system and the fear of misinterpreting families' educational practices also emerged as relevant obstacles, as in previous research (Schols et al., 2013; Toros & Tiirik, 2014). Another barrier that might be particularly associated with the school environment was the need to obtain the principal's approval in order to report potential cases of victimization. This barrier has also been recorded in previous studies, which found that most teachers tend to report their suspicions inside the institution rather than to the corresponding authorities (Kenny, 2001). This adds a step to the process in which the report of a possible victimization case can be withdrawn without further assessment, thus increasing the possibility that the minor will continue being victimized (Dinehart & Kenny, 2015; Kenny, 2001).

Predictors of reporting behavior

School staff members appeared to be familiar with the possible consequences of victimization and most had had suspicions during their careers. So what is stopping them from acting on these suspicions? Considering only respondents that answered the item referring to the amount of suspicions ($n = 182$), more than 74% of the sample stated that they had had at least one suspicion during their time working with minors, but only 27% had ever made a report of these suspicions to the authorities, as required by the laws. Although we cannot assume that all suspicions were in fact real cases of child victimization, this reluctance to report potential cases may (at least partially) explain the gap between the true prevalence, which remains unknown, and the cases known to the child welfare services (Hillis et al., 2016b; Webster et al., 2005). Ways of highlighting the responsibilities of school staff members with regard to the protection of minors are urgently needed.

This study has succeeded in terms of quantifying the effect of variables mentioned in other studies in Spain (Cerezo & Pons, 2004; Liébana et al., 2015; Priegue & Cambeiro, 2016) and abroad (Kenny, 2001, 2014; Schols et al., 2013) when analyzing reporting behavior.

According to our results, with every year of experience, school staff members are slightly more likely to report their suspicions. Some studies have found similar results (Toros & Tiirik, 2014; Walsh et al., 2012), though others have not (Haj-Yahia & Attar-Schwartz, 2008) and some even found no significant correlation between this variable and reporting possible cases (Kenny, 2004). Although in our case we found little impact of this variable, it appears that the time the staff member has been employed in the field is a positive point for reporting suspicions. Possibly, spending more time in contact with minors opens up a broader spectrum of possible cases; alternatively, these professionals will have more experience and may feel more secure in their work, and may thus be more likely to report possible cases (Kenny, 2001; Walsh et al., 2008).

An interesting result was the fact that males were significantly more likely to report potential cases of victimization than females. Gender has also shown divergent results as a predictor of reporting behavior: in one study it was found to be non-significant (Crenshaw et al., 1995), while in others females were more likely to report (Kenny, 2001, 2004). This variable may be strongly related with cultural aspects and with the fear of possible retaliation from the perpetrators (Alvarez et al., 2004). Besides, the high proportion of female employees in schools may be an important factor in the tendency of failing to report suspicions from the school environment.

Acknowledging that school workers should intervene even when educational practices in families from different cultures may be more tolerant towards maltreatment is a variable that also had a significant effect in increasing reporting of possible cases of victimization. It could be that this knowledge mitigates the fear of making an inaccurate report, as a study with preschool teachers showed (Toros & Tiirik, 2014). Finally, the fear that child welfare services interventions might be bad for the minor significantly reduced the likelihood of reporting any victimization suspicion. Doubts of this kind have been pointed out by other studies performed with this population (Cerezo & Pons, 2004; Kenny, 2001; Schols et al., 2013). As highlighted by those studies and by our results, the image of child welfare services needs to be improved if the aim is to decrease the rate of underreporting of suspicions or also of actual cases.

Practical Implications

Our results underline the great potential that school has for reducing the gap between the detection and the reporting of potential crimes against underage victims (Cerezo & Pons, 2004; Dinehart & Kenny, 2015; Walsh et al., 2012). School staff need to learn about reporting protocols and procedures, and must be more aware of their legal responsibility to protect children and youth by means of communicating their doubts to child welfare services. Although they have some knowledge about minors' protection, more training is needed if minors' well-being is to be prioritized over staff members' personal hesitations or fears (Finkelhor et al., 2001, 2008). In view of the positive effect of training (Cerezo & Pons, 2004; López & Del Campo, 2006; Kenny, 2004), more interventions of this kind should be provided to schools. Training programs should focus specifically on the most common barriers to report potential cases of victimization, such as technical aspects of the reporting procedure itself, the role of child welfare services, and the importance of distinguishing between strict educational practices and abuse.

This study also shed light on the particular school dynamics that affect reporting behavior, such as the misconception that staff need their principal's consent, or the tendency of female workers to be less likely to report potential cases. In the light of these findings, school conventions and protocols should be updated and other measures should be designed to increase child and youth

protection. These should be easily comprehensible and accessible for all school staff members in contact with minors.

Sociodemographic variables that appear to be involved in detecting and reporting but cannot be changed through training, such as gender or years of experience, should also be considered. For instance, it may be useful to create working networks in which individuals who are more likely to report their suspicions (i.e., males and with more years of experience) can share their knowledge and experience with colleagues who are less likely to report these doubts. Since school staff members usually turn to their colleagues as their first source of support when sharing their concerns (Schols et al., 2013), positive experiences with the child welfare system could also be an effective way of encouraging the reporting of potential cases.

Limitations

Even though our sample is similar to most international studies in terms of demographic variables such as gender, mean age and years of experience (Dinehart & Kenny, 2015; Kenny, 2004; Schols et al., 2013; Walsh et al., 2012), generalization is particularly challenging in studies like ours because the variables may be strongly related to the context in which the analyses were performed (Toros & Tiirik, 2014). In addition, the results reported in this study should be interpreted with caution since the school districts with the highest levels of family income and education are not represented in our results (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2015). Previous work (Finkelhor, 2008) has already highlighted the misapprehension that victimization mostly occurs in low social-economic settings and does not affect higher social classes. Further research is needed to explore whether these neighborhoods present other specific obstacles to reporting.

Because the study was designed to assess a particular context and since none of the available instruments entirely covered our objective, we were obliged to create a new questionnaire. Although some evidence of validity was collected when pre-testing the questionnaire (which included target participants' opinions combined with scientific and technical knowledge) some of the results might be affected by characteristics of the instrument and its measuring properties. Further applications of this questionnaire or replication will clarify the potential effects of this limitation.

There was also a high rate of missing cases in a question (i.e., States that there is a protocol for reporting at his/her school) and in some of the other statements. The former was placed just after the items that had to be filled in only by participants who had reported. We believe that the location of this item could have led to skip it to participants that never reported, which represents the major proportion in our sample.

Finally, it could also be of interest to determine what proportion of the whole school staff members agreed to participate and if they differ from those who declined in a significant way. We expect to be able to address these aspects in future research.

2.1.6. Conclusions

The school environment is key to the early detection of child victimization and school staff need to accept their responsibility to report in cases of suspicion. To help them to do so, training must be offered and support must be assured when a suspicious case is detected. Only then will school staff be able to effectively look after children and youth victims with the ultimate aim of providing them with the protection and help they need.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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2.2. Study 2: Detection and reporting potential victimization cases from school: The role of knowledge.

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2.2.1. Abstract

Knowledge of child victimization among school staff is believed to affect the detection and reporting of potential cases in the school environment, but the current evidence is scarce and contradictory. We assessed the link between knowledge of victimization and other relevant reporter characteristics in detecting and reporting children suspected to be victims of violence in a sample of 184 school staff members from Spain (84.02% females, $M = 43.40$, $SD = 10.37$). We compared participants who had never detected nor reported any cases (i.e., non-detectors) with participants who had detected but not reported outside school (i.e., inconsistent reporters) and participants who had detected and reported at least one potential case (i.e., consistent reporters). Knowledge about the reporting procedures varied significantly across groups. Years of experience was the only variable to significantly predict having detected at least one case across job experience. Knowing whether a report can be made anonymously or without the principal's consent was significant to predict the likelihood of being a consistent reporter, along with hours spent daily in contact with students. Trainings for school staff should be aware of what specific aspects of knowledge tend to increase detection and reporting. Interventions should include more specific guidelines and ways of recreating experience (e.g., role-playing, virtual scenarios) as an effective strategy to respond to cases of potential victimization encountered at school.

Keywords: Victimization; Knowledge; Detection; Report; School.

2.2.2. Introduction

Detection and reporting victimization from school

Childhood victimization, defined by Finkelhor (2008, p. 23) as “harm that comes to individuals because other human actors have behaved in ways that violate social norms” affects a large proportion of our population (Hillis et al., 2016a). It may have devastating effects in terms of development delay, affecting school performance (Veltman & Browne, 2001) but also in mental health, as it has been linked to psychiatric disorders such as anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder (Carvalho et al 2016). Long-lasting consequences for victims' health have also been reported (Gilbert et al., 2009b; Widom et al., 2008), such as an increased risk of developing diabetes (Widom et al., 2012). Children who suffered violence are also more likely to experience other types of violence over the course of the lifespan (Finkelhor et al., 2007), making it hard for them to integrate into the community (Turner et al., 2013).

However, studies conducted in different countries (see Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, & Holt, 2009), and reports by official agencies (World Health Organization, 2013) warn that between 80%

and 90% of cases of child and youth victimization are not reported to the public services and authorities tasked with helping victims. This situation prevents children and adolescents at risk from receiving the support they need, extends the victimization they are currently experiencing, and increases the risk that they will be subjected to further victimization in the future (Finkelhor, et al., 2009).

Schools are ideal environments for providing children and youth victims with a source of support (Gilbert et al., 2009a), mainly because most children and adolescents spend an important part of their lives at school. Besides, the structure of the school institution gives adults in this context multiple opportunities to observe indicators of exposure to violence such as sudden poor performance on a standardized test, absenteeism (Fry et al., 2018) or aggressive interactions towards peers or teachers (Becker, Brandt, Stephan, & Chorpita, 2014). This is why school staff in several countries are mandated to report any situations of potential risk of violence (including being physically maltreated, neglected, or sexually assaulted by adults or peers in any context) to the immediate authorities. This duty is difficult to fulfill since most children tend not to disclose instances of victimization to adults during their childhood, because of a lack of trust in adults or authorities, a sense of loyalty toward their abuser, fear of being disbelieved, hopelessness, self-blame or the normalization of the violence experienced (Jernbro et al., 2017). However, in a study of 2,500 adults, over 45% of the participants who had suffered some kind of victimization declared having disclosed it to a teacher, a counselor, or a member of the school health staff (Cater et al., 2016). In another study, adult victims expressed regret that their teachers did not reach out for them more (Buckley et al., 2007).

The percentage of potential victimization cases that are reported to child welfare services from the educational context seems to mirror the challenge that educators face when confronted with suspected victimization and their duty to report. In the US, 16.5% of cases reported come from the school setting, and in Australia, 15% (Goebbels, Nicholson, Walsh, & De Vries, 2008). In European countries like Spain (Cerezo & Pons, 2004), Greece (Bibou-Nakou & Markos, 2017), and the UK (Cleaver & Walker, 2004) these rates are also between 10% and 18%. In countries where reporting rates from school are higher, such as Canada (36%, King & Scott, 2014) or Belgium (38%, Brussel Vertrouwenscentrum Kindermishandeling, 2016), there is usually a problem of substantiation (Kesner & Robinson, 2002). Even when not all suspected cases are expected to reach an external agency outside school, the proportion of cases that go underreported seems concerning, especially among educators in charge of young children (Choo, Walsh, Chinna, & Tey, 2013; Dinehart & Kenny, 2015; Feng, Huang, & Wang, 2010). A matter of particular concern this year is that agencies are

seeing a dramatic reduction in reporting since the closure of schools due to COVID-19 (Baron et al, 2020).

Considering the complex dynamics that intervene in children and youth victimization and the tendency of victims to remain silent about these experiences (Jernbro et al., 2017) it is very hard for school staff members to effectively detect and report potential cases. These difficulties may have two consequences: a) students who are experiencing or at risk of victimization may not be effectively identified; or b) these concerns may not be reported to any service or authority, even though they suspect that victimization may occur. Some studies have found that most school staff never detected a potential case (e.g., 85% out of 2,017 pre-school teachers in Svensson et al., 2015), while others found that over half of their respondents had detected and consistently reported at least one case over the course of their career (e.g., 55% out of 353 elementary school teachers in Goebbels et al., 2008). Finally, there is also evidence that a considerable proportion fail to make a report even when they are concerned about a student (e.g., 11% in Feng et al., 2010).

The role of knowledge

As suggested by previous studies, both detection and reporting potential victims of violence may be influenced by school staff members' knowledge of victimization (Álvarez, Kenny, Donohue, & Carpin, 2004). A recent review (Alazri & Hannah, 2020) found that insufficient knowledge about specific types of victimization, such as the signs for correctly identifying neglect or emotional abuse, prevented school personnel from making reports. A lack of familiarity with reporting procedures in terms of the consequences for the reporter (van Bergeijk & Sarmiento, 2006) and for the child has also been consistently cited as a barrier to reporting (Dinehart & Kenny, 2015; Feng et al., 2010). Another common reason for not reporting which is mentioned by school staff is their unawareness of the child protection system procedures or concern about its possible interventions (Bibou-Nakou & Markos, 2017; Hurtado et al., 2013).

Most studies of school staff members' knowledge of different types of child victimization, such as physical abuse and/or neglect (Walsh & Farrell, 2008), sexual abuse (Márquez et al., 2016) and peer victimization (Edwards et al, 2019) have found low levels of knowledge that may explain their problems in detection and reporting. These deficiencies have been found among school professionals of all kinds: early caregivers (Dinehart & Kenny, 2015), pre-school teachers (Svensson et al. 2015), elementary school teachers (Goebbels et al., 2008) and school staff in general (Edwards et al., 2017), in very different cultures (see, for example, AlBuhairan, Iman, AlEissa, Noor, & Almuneef, 2011 in Saudi Arabia).

However, some research argues that this population's knowledge of victimization is quite high (Edwards et al., 2019). Besides, there is evidence that school staff members' decisions to act on

a suspicion by reporting it to services outside school depends not only on reporters' knowledge, but on the case and system characteristics (Alazri & Hanna, 2020). Some authors have even argued that increased knowledge might have little effect on disclosures, detection or reporting (Barron & Topping, 2010).

In sum, findings regarding the level of school staff's knowledge of children and youth victimization and its effects on detection and reporting are inconsistent and question the presence of a relationship between these two variables. Few studies report a relationship (with the exception of Bibou-Nakou & Markos, 2017 and Webster et al, 2005), and several have only considered one specific type of violence, such as child sexual abuse (Hurtado et al., 2013; Márquez et al., 2016) or dating violence (Edwards et al., 2019).

The role of other reporter characteristics

Among the many variables studied in a recent review of 16 articles, Alazri and Hannah (2020) highlighted several reporter characteristics that influence reporting: having received training, years of professional experience, feelings such as self-confidence, fear or uncertainty, and the link with other resources within the school (e.g., the support provided by a reference person or clear guidelines and protocols for making reports).

In terms of experience, most studies have found that participants who receive training about child victimization tend to report more (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010; Cerezo & Pons, 2004). Although a similar positive correlation has been found between reporting and years of experience (Dinehart & Kenny, 2015), the the association was not statistically significant in all studies (Alazri & Hannah, 2020).

Another variable that affects detection and reporting behaviors seems to be the confidence in one's ability to carry out a report plan (Goebbels et al, 2008), which significantly predicts intention to report, even in difficult cases (Feng et al., 2010). The support of staff specialized in reporting children at risk in the school environment (e.g., school counsellors) has also been found to affect the decision to report (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010).

Goebbels et al. (2008) explored how these characteristics varied among teachers who had never suspected any cases of child abuse or neglect among their students (i.e., non-detectors), teachers who had suspected but failed to report at least one case (i.e., inconsistent reporters) and teachers who systematically reported their suspicions of students being victimized (i.e., consistent reporters). They found that non-detectors had significantly lower levels of qualification and less years of experience, and had significantly lower levels of self-confidence than the other two groups. The likelihood of being a consistent reporter could only be predicted by having a clear action plan. That study proposed a synthesis of the complex picture of deterrents to report found in previous research. Goebbels et al

(2008) research was the inspiration for the present study, with the difference that we included the level of knowledge as potential predictor of detection and reporting and extend the participation to all school staff in contact with children.

Purpose of the Present Study

The aim of the present study is to explore the relationship between school staff members' level of knowledge of all kinds of victimization and their experience of detecting and reporting. We also aim to compare the effect of knowledge with the potential influence of other reporter characteristics. The findings may guide future interventions through achieving a deeper understanding of the effect of knowledge in the recognition of potential cases of victimization and the decision to contact external sources of support.

The research questions and hypothesis that guided this study were:

- (1) Does the level of knowledge vary between school staff that have never detected any potential cases (i.e., non-detectors), staff that have detected instances but decided not to report their suspicions (i.e., inconsistent reporters) and staff that have detected and reported at least one case at some point in their careers (i.e., consistent reporters)? This categorization was based on previous literature (Goebbels et al., 2008). Considering that in previous studies knowledge was significantly associated with identifying and reporting potential cases (Dinehart & Kenny, 2015; Hurtado et al, 2013; Webster et al., 2005), we expected that higher levels of knowledge would be found among consistent reporters.
- (2) Is the level of knowledge relevant to predict a staff member's classification as a non-detector, inconsistent reporter or consistent reporter, even when controlling for other relevant reporter characteristics? Given the complex picture described in the literature, we expected that certain variables like having received training (Mathews et al., 2017) or confidence in one's ability to deal with detection and reporting (Feng et al., 2010; Goebbels et al., 2008) might predict the experience of detection and reporting more strongly than knowledge.

2.2.3. Methods

Participants

Sampling strategy. Assuming maximal heterogeneity and a confidence interval of 95%, a sample size of 386 participants was deemed necessary to achieve representativity. Expecting between 10 and 12 participants per school, 38 schools were then randomly selected and invited to participate. All schools from the city of Barcelona in Spain were stratified by district and type of funding (i.e., publicly funded, private, or semi-private) and a one-stage cluster sampling strategy was used, maintaining proportionality in terms of the type and number of schools per district. From the 38

schools invited, 18 (47%) accepted. Schools that rejected to participate was mostly due to time constraints and other responsibilities overlapping with the study collaboration. A total of 184 staff members at these schools filled in a self-administered questionnaire. The total number of schools invited and those that participated per city district may be consulted in Table 15.

Sample. The final sample comprised 184 school staff members aged between 22 and 64 years old (84.04% females, $M = 43.40$, $SD = 10.37$). Years of working experience ranged from 0 to 48 years, with a mean of 19.43 ($SD = 10.39$). Most participants were working in elementary school or kindergarten (76.63%), 15.76% worked in middle or high-school and 7.61% at both school levels. Most were teachers who spent over four hours a day in charge of students (51.63%), 28.53% were staff who spent less than four hours a day in charge of students (e.g., monitors or special subject teachers), and 19.61% were special education teachers, psychologists, coordinators or other types of school staff whose functions brought them into contact with the students.

Instrument

The questionnaire used included a definition of victimization based on Finkelhor's framework (2007) but also considering the mandatory requirements⁵ in the context of this research (i.e., *potential or actual harm (psychological or physical) caused by the intentional behavior (whether by action or omission) of individuals or groups of individuals towards someone younger than 18 years old, which interferes or might interfere with their optimal development in the short or the long-term*). It comprised a list of 45 items to measure knowledge and experience on victimization itself, its detection, and its reporting. There was also a section aimed to collect sociodemographic information. The questionnaire was created *ad hoc* for the current study, but it was based on previous work with similar aims (e.g., Dinehart & Kenny, 2015; Hurtado et al., 2013; Mathews et al., 2017) and adapted to the Spanish culture and context. The instrument was pre-tested with three different strategies. We used cognitive interviews ($n = 5$, 100% women, $M = 25.4$ years old, $SD = 1.16$) and focus group ($n = 8$, 75% women, $M = 27.5$ years old, $SD = 5.8$) with the target audience and an expert consulting ($n = 2$, 100% women, $M = 35.5$ years old, $SD = 1.50$) with a specialist in childhood victimization and an expert in methodology of survey studies. The instrument was available in the two official languages (Spanish and Catalan) and in on-line or printed versions to better suit the target population preferences. The measurements used were the following:

Outcomes.

Detection. Interviewees were asked "How many times during your career have you suspected that a minor might be being victimized?" after being given the definition mentioned above. There

⁵ Minors' Legal Protection Act of 1996 and the Modification of the Child Protection Services Act of 2015.

were four possible answers (“Never”, “Between one and ten times”, “Between 11 and 20 times” and “Over 20 times”).

Reporting. Participants were asked if they had ever reported a suspected case to an external agency during their career. The possible answers were “Yes”, “No” and “I never had any suspicions”.

Knowledge of victimization, detection and reporting. Items assessing knowledge were 10 statements about victimization (e.g., “Victimization affects less than 10% of children in Spain”), 10 statements about detection (e.g., “Most of the signs regarding child abuse are directly observable”) and 10 statements about reporting (e.g., “Reporting a suspicion is legally mandated in Spain”). Participants answered each statement “Yes”, “No” or “I don’t know”.

Other reporter characteristics

Training in victimization. Respondents were asked to answer to the item “Have you ever received any kind of training about children and youth victimization?” with the options, “Yes”, “No” or “I am not sure about it”. Participants answering “Yes” were considered to have been trained, whereas participants that chose any of the other options were considered not to have been trained.

Confidence in their ability to recognize victimization. This variable was addressed through two questions considering what has been argued in previous literature (King & Scott, 2014): whether participants considered themselves able to recognize signs in a child of potential victimization, and whether they considered themselves able to recognize the signs in a child’s family. Each of these questions could be answered by choosing between “Yes”, “No” and “not sure”. Participants were grouped according to their responses to each of these items separately (i.e., those who answered “Yes” and those who chose “No” or “not sure”).

Reference person. Participants were asked whether if they were able to identify a reference person to talk about suspicions of children victimization within the school framework. Possible answers were “Yes”, “No” and “not sure”. Only respondents answering “Yes” were considered to have a clear reference point at school.

Familiarity with the protocol. Participants were asked if they were aware of a protocol to guide the reporting of suspicion of children and youth victimization at their school. Possible answers were “Yes”/ “No” / “I am not sure” . Respondents answering “Yes” were considered to be aware of the protocol and respondents answering “No” or “not sure” were deemed to be unaware of it.

Sociodemographic and professional data. Information on the respondent’s gender, age, role in school, school level at which they worked, and their years of experience working with minors was compiled from the answers to five questions. We created the category hours per day in charge of groups of students according to participants’ roles at their schools, considering the time and type of supervision provided to students. The first category comprised school staff who spent four hours or

more in charge of the same group of children or adolescents (e.g., kindergarten and elementary school teachers). The second included school staff members who spent less than four hours per day with the same group of students (e.g., teachers of specific courses such as art, music, physical education, lunchtime or playground monitors, etc.). The last comprised staff such as head teachers, special education teachers or school psychologists who were not in charge of groups of children or adolescents but encountered them sporadically or in specific situations (e.g., intervening in a conflict). Participants that had more than one role were considered in the one with more hours in charge of students (e.g., a participant who was a teacher and a coordinator was included in the first category). The level at which the staff member was working was coded on the same basis, creating three categories: a) kindergarten and elementary school staff, b) middle and high school staff, and c) staff working at both levels.

Procedure

All procedures were conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Assembly, 2013), the ethical standards drawn up by our university's Committee on Bioethics, and the legal requirements in force in our region.

A reference person at each selected school (i.e., the principal, the academic coordinator, or the dean) was contacted by phone in February 2016, and the aim and procedure of the study were explained. Once the reference person gave consent, they were asked to invite all school staff members in contact with students at their school to participate online or by filling in printed questionnaires. All participants received a brief written invitation explaining the study's aims and specifying that the data would remain anonymous and confidential. They were also informed that participation was voluntary. All participants gave written consent before taking part in the study. School staff members were provided with a contact phone-line and e-mail address to clarify any doubts or to report that they wished to abandon their participation at any stage of the study. Data collection was completed in May 2016 and by the end of the semester (June 2016), the person of reference at each school received a brief report with the results.

Data Analysis

Around 5% of data (range 0.005% to 17% according to variable) were missing due to non-response. All variables had at least one missing data point, and 99 participants had no missing data. In view of the results of Little's test of missing data pattern results ($p < .05$) and our proportion of missing data, we decided to use multiple imputation (MI), provided by *mice* package (van Buuren, & Groothuis-Oudshoorn, 2011) in R (R Core Team, 2015). MI is widely used as it allows a consideration of the uncertainty of the missing values (Resvan et al., 2015). The incomplete dataset was replicated 10 times ($m = 10$) replacing the missing points with plausible values using multiple chained equations,

including all variables as auxiliaries in the model. Imputed values were assessed through plots and summary statistics, and no significant differences were found between imputed and observed data. Estimates were then combined using ‘Rubin’s rules’ (Rubin, 1987) with *mice* and *psmfi* packages (Heyman, 2020). The analyses were also performed in the raw dataset (as shown in Table 16) and with $m = 40$ (see Table 17).

Following previous work (Goebbels et al., 2008; Svensson et al., 2015), participants were classified in three different groups: a) non-detectors (i.e., those who claimed they had never suspected a case of victimization, 26% of the sample), b) inconsistent reporters (i.e., participants who had had at least one suspicion over their careers but never reported a suspicion outside school, 53% of the sample), and c) consistent reporters (i.e., participants who had had at least one suspicion and stated that they had made reports to an external agency outside school, 21% of the sample). To answer research question (1), the proportion of correct answers per item for the three groups (non-detectors, inconsistent reporters and consistent reporters) were obtained. We used the Chi-squared test to compare percentages across groups in each dataset and then obtained a single D2 estimate (van Buuren, 2018). In order to quantify the links between knowledge, experience, sociodemographic and professional data and belonging to a particular group, we estimated and averaged effect sizes using Cramer’s V coefficient (except for years of experience, which was compared using Kruskal-Wallis test, obtaining an η^2). For each knowledge statement, the effect size was considered to be small when Cramer’s V values were between .07 and .20, moderate with values from .21 to .34, and large with .35 or above (Cohen, 1988). To answer research question (2), we ran two logistic regression models: one to predict the likelihood of being a detector (non-detectors vs. inconsistent and consistent reporters, $n = 184$) and another one excluding non-detectors ($n = 136$) to predict the likelihood among reporters of being consistent or inconsistent. For the models to be parsimonious and to avoid compromising the statistical power of our analysis, we included as predictors only those knowledge statements or other variables that had at least a medium effect size (Cramer’s $V > .20$ or $\eta^2 > .08$) in the bivariate analysis. Exponential beta coefficients are reported along with their 95% confidence interval. Statistical significance was tested through the D1 statistic, as recommended in MI (van Buuren, 2018). Multicollinearity was checked through variance inflation factors (VIF) and independence of errors was checked through the Durbin-Watson test; assumptions were met. All statistical analyses were performed using the R software (R Core Team, 2015).

2.2.4. Results

Bivariate analysis for knowledge

The comparisons to test whether the level of knowledge varied between non-detectors, inconsistent reporters and consistent reporters (the first research question) are shown in Table 13. As can be seen, three statements (i.e., “In most cases, child welfare services interventions are not good for the minor’s well-being”, “If the informant wishes to report anonymously, he/she may do so”, and “The school principal’s consent must be obtained before reporting” presented a medium significant effect ($V = .22, .21$ and $.25$, respectively) with a higher percentage of correct answers among consistent reporters vs. non-detectors and inconsistent reporters.

Table 13. Proportions of participants answering correctly in non-detectors, inconsistent reporters and consistent reporters' groups, and distribution of other variables of interest.

	Non-detectors	Inconsistent reporters	Consistent reporters	D2 ^a	<i>Cramer's</i> <i>V</i>
<i>Knowledge</i>					
1. Minors and adults are equally vulnerable to violence	.44	.39	.37	0.16	.03
2. If a behavior is harmful to the minor we consider it victimization, regardless of its intention	.15	.11	.03	1.23	.11
3. Child victimization can affect the minor's neurological development	.90	.95	.97	0.74	.11
4. We only consider victimization in a situation in which the minor's physical health is in immediate danger	.66	.80	.78	1.53	.14
5. Most parents who victimize their children are mentally or psychologically ill	.62	.49	.63	1.22	.13
6. Child victimization is always an action perpetrated by a grown-up against a minor	.70	.71	.70	0.05	.02
7. Physical maltreatment is the most frequent type of victimization	.43	.47	.52	0.22	.06
8. A minor who has suffered victimization is more likely to develop depression as an adult	.71	.80	.70	0.72	.08
9. Child victimization affects less than 10% of minors in Spain	.14	.16	.26	0.92	.11
10. A minor who has been victimized usually develops a feeling of rejection towards the perpetrator	.22	.26	.40	1.41	.15
11. Most signs of child victimization are directly observable	.57	.66	.74	1.04	.12

12. Only if I see more than one sign at a time can I suspect that a minor might be being victimized	.32	.33	.40	0.22	.08
13. Protecting minors' well-being is a legal obligation, even if it means getting involved in situations outside the school context	.61	.57	.65	0.08	.07
14. If the minor belongs to a culture that is more tolerant regarding abuse, we should not get involved	.75	.67	.85	1.69	.15
15. The frequency of an aggressive behavior is crucial to suspecting whether a minor is being victimized or not	.47	.49	.42	0.19	.05
16. A minor growing up in a one-parent family is more likely to experience victimization	.05	.06	.06	0.23	.04
17. A minor with low self-esteem is more likely to experience victimization	.66	.61	.68	0.23	.06
18. An isolated family is considered more likely to perpetrate victimization	.37	.33	.28	0.22	.08
19. A family that shows excessive protection towards their minors is associated with stronger precaution regarding victimization	.50	.55	.66	0.83	.11
20. It is easy to define whether a behavior can be considered abuse or not	.50	.55	.70	1.30	.15
21. In case of severe abuse, the first institution outside the school that should be notified is the police	.40	.42	.40	0.05	.12
22. In case of mild abuse, the first institution outside the school that should be notified is child welfare services	.60	.66	.79	1.21	.14
23. We should only report a case if we know for sure that the minor is being victimized	.25	.28	.35	0.39	.07
24. In most cases, child welfare services interventions are not good for the minor's well-being	.30	.33	.59	3.67**	.22**

25. If the informant wishes to report anonymously, he/she may do so	.17	.09	.30	3.54*	.21*
26. A report makes a judge aware of the case	.16	.20	.36	2.13	.17
27. If a suspicion turns out not to be true, the family is entitled to sue the informant	.13	.06	.14	0.97	.09
28. Too many reports make the system collapse	.26	.29	.41	0.90	.12
29. Reporting is up to the informant: the person who has the suspicion decides whether to report it	.31	.34	.46	0.87	.11
30. The school principal's consent must be obtained before reporting	.16	.13	.38	4.64**	.25*
<i>Other reporter characteristics</i>					
Have been trained	.04	.13	.17	1.42	.13
Self- confidence to recognize signs in minors	.25	.19	.16	0.42	.05
Self-confidence to recognize signs in families	.20	.08	.16	1.55	.13
Identifies a referent person in school	.43	.59	.71	2.61*	.19
Knows the school's protocol	.23	.33	.34	0.73	.08
Gender					
Female	.85	.86	.76	0.88	.11
Male	.15	.14	.24		
Level					
Preschool or Elementary	.83	.75	.66		
Middle or high school	.15	.16	.16	1.72	.09
Both	.02	.08	.12		
Years of experience ^b					.10
Hours a day in charge of groups of students					

Four hours or more	.58	.49	.50		
Fewer than four hours	.06	.17	.43	10.18***	.26
Specific or sporadic contact	.35	.34	.05		

Note. Proportions and Cramer's V have been computed in each imputed dataset and then averaged.

^a Statistical significance assessed by means of D2 statistic (combined Chi squared results of each of the 10 imputed datasets following van Buuren, 2018) is shown by multiple stars: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

^b Mean (SD), comparison made by Kruskal Wallis χ^2 test and η^2 as effect size.

Bivariate analysis for other reporter characteristics

To decide which variables to include in our logistic regression model, we also tested whether other reporter characteristics varied significantly between non-detectors, inconsistent reporters, and consistent reporters. As shown in Table 13, identifying a reference person in school ($V = .19$), hours per day in charge of students ($V = .26$), and years of experience ($\eta^2 = .10$) displayed significant effects.

Logistic regression models with knowledge and other reporter characteristics

Table 14 shows the results for the two logistic regression models aimed to predict the participants' membership of each group (i.e., model 1: non-detectors vs. detectors; model 2: inconsistent reporters vs. consistent reporters), based on the knowledge and other reporter characteristics. Using these analyses, we aimed to test whether the level of knowledge was relevant to predict staff members' classification as non-detectors, inconsistent reporters or consistent reporters, even when controlling for other reporter characteristics (the second research question). Only variables that had significant medium effect sizes in the bivariate analysis (i.e., knowledge statements 24, 25 and 30, hours per day in charge of students and years of experience) were included.

Table 14. Logistic regressions to test the influence of knowledge in detecting (non-detectors vs. inconsistent and consistent reporters) (Model 1) and reporting (inconsistent vs consistent reporters) (Model 2) potential victimization cases.

	<i>Model 1 (n = 184)</i>		<i>Model 2 (n = 136)</i>	
	e^{β} (95% CI)	D1 ^a	e^{β} (95% CI)	D1 ^a
<i>Intercept</i>	0.97 (0.41 - 2.27)	-	0.11 (0.03 - 0.37)***	-
24. In most cases, child welfare services interventions are not good for the minor's well-being	1.32 (0.60 - 2.91)	0.32	1.67 (0.85 - 8.35)	2.53
25. If the informant wishes to report anonymously, he/she may do so	0.67 (0.25 - 1.81)	0.31	3.85 (1.002 - 14.75)*	4.36*
30. The school principal's consent must be obtained before reporting	1.13 (0.40-3.23)	0.06	3.06 (1.002 - 9.32)*	3.95*
Years of experience	1.05 (1.01-1.09)*	5.11*	1.02 (0.74 - 5.47)	1.11
<i>Hours a day in charge of groups of students (Reference = Four hours or more)</i>		1.73		4.55*
Fewer than four hours	3.46 (0.93-12.91)	1.59	2.01 (0.74-5.46)	1.72
Specific or sporadic contact	1.14 (0.52-2.49)	0.59	0.16 (0.03-0.85)*	-2.30

Note. Pooled Nagelkerke's R^2 for model 1: .13, for model 2: .35.

^a Statistical significance assessed by means of D1 statistic (combined results of each of the 10 imputed datasets following van Buuren, 2018)

2.2.5. Discussion

Previous studies of the impact of school staff members' knowledge of victimization and its detection and reporting on their actual detection and reporting behavior have presented inconsistent and sometimes contradictory findings (e.g., Bibou-Nakou & Markos, 2017; Goebbels et al., 2008). As demanded in recent research (Alazri & Hanna, 2020), we hope that our study will provide relevant information to help clarify the specific role that knowledge plays within the complex picture of detection and reporting potential victimization among school staff.

The role of knowledge of victimization, detection and reporting

Our first hypothesis that higher levels of knowledge would be displayed by school staff classified as consistent reporters (i.e., had detected potential cases and reported at least once) was only partially confirmed. Only some of the statements referring to knowledge of reporting, (i.e., the belief that interventions from child welfare services are not good for the child's well-being, the possibility of reporting anonymously and the need for the principal's consent also reported a significant difference among groups) showed medium effect sizes. In their assessments, school staff seem to consider the potential effect that reporting might have on the children in question when deciding whether or not to report a suspicion (Goebbels et al., 2008), even though it is not their responsibility. Better communication between child welfare services could help school staff to gain trust in these agencies and understand their duties more clearly. Interestingly, in some of these items inconsistent reporters scored lower than non-detectors, which may suggest that familiarity with the reporting procedures influences not just reporting but detection as well. It is also important to underline this result with regard to public policymaking: the authorities should make it easy for school staff members to report cases by providing clear and accurate instructions about the reporting procedure (Alazri & Hanna, 2020).

As other studies have highlighted (Dinehart & Kenny, 2015), knowledge of violence against children and youth, its typologies, prevalence and/or consequences does not seem to increase the detection of potential cases or the reporting of suspicions. Maybe, specific and practical information about reporting procedures are more effective than knowledge in victimization itself. In this regard, the trauma sensitive schools approach (Panlilio, 2019) promotes an integrative view of the child's development and stimulates staff to bond significantly with their students. This approach may be more effective in detecting risky situations than looking for specific signs.

The role of knowledge compared to other reporter characteristics

Regarding our second hypothesis, we expected that some variables other than knowledge, for example having been trained (Mathews et al., 2017), having the confidence to act on a suspicion

(Goebbels et al., 2008), recognizing signs in minors or families (King & Scott, 2014) could better predict the experience of detection and reporting. Contradicting our expectations, the effect of some statements of knowledge was significant even when including the effect of other relevant variables.

Correct responses to the statements “If the informant wishes to report anonymously, he/she may do so” and “The school principal’s consent must be obtained before reporting” significantly increased the likelihood of being a consistent reporter. It seems important to clarify that all people are entitled (and in Spain, obliged) to pursue a report outside school when they consider that a child might be in danger, even when the school principal does not agree. It is also crucial to encourage school staff members to make these reports even though their anonymity will not be upheld and to overcome the fear of retaliation (Mathews et al., 2017).

However, years of experience also showed a significant effect in our logistic regression model for predicting the likelihood of detecting at least one instance compared to being a non-detector. This finding is in line with previous reports (Mathews et al., 2017) but contradicts others (Alazri & Hanna, 2020), suggesting that detection does not increase systematically after training or experience *per se*, but probably depends on the quality of the educational program and past experience. Ways of recreating experience should be developed in training programs for school staff. Further research could develop and test the effect of including simulations of real situations of reporting through role-playing or recreating the experience by means of new technologies such as virtual reality. This latter method could gain relevance given the need to develop alternative ways for schools to perform their protective tasks, even if they stay closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Baron et al., 2020). Virtual reality is being used in some proposals addressed to students in order to prevent some types of peer victimization, with promising evidence (Ingram et al, 2019). Besides, the first-hand experience of those who had previously reported cases should be shared with all school staff members in order to dispel misconceptions regarding reporting procedures, such as the fear for negative impact (Edwards et al., 2017). Finally, it could also be helpful to propose strategies for school staff to cope with the stress they may feel in these sensitive situations (van Bergeijk & Sarmiento, 2006).

The finding that school staff members with sporadic contact with children were less likely to be consistent reporters is an interesting result. These workers are usually counselors or principals, who are mostly responsible for leading reports or for guiding students through stressful experiences. These staff are also seen as reference points for other staff members, and our results suggest that this status also plays an important role. Thus, as shown by research performed exclusively with these staff members (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010; Lusk et al., 2015), more efforts should be made to highlight the responsibility of principals and counselors in terms of encouraging other staff to detect and report

potential cases of victimization in spite of the complexity of the situation. Nevertheless, the fact that this type of staff spends less time in direct contact with children makes this finding logical.

Limitations

Even though the characteristics of our sample are similar to those reported by previous studies in terms of gender and years of working experience (Bibou-Nakou & Markos, 2017; Dinehart & Kenny, 2015) and the response rate of our study by school is also within the ranges reported (e.g., 26% in Bryant & Baldwin, 2010; 60% in Choo et al., 2013; and 47% in Feng et al., 2010), certain limitations should be borne in mind. First, given that no information on the number of school staff members per school was not available, the response rate per individual could not be estimated, so the generalizability of the results needs to be retested in future studies with larger samples. Second, in this research we did not focus on information regarding the characteristics of the detected cases, so further research including the influence of this aspect might add to the present contributions. A final limitation worth considering is the instrument used. Even though the questionnaire was extensively pre-tested and similar methodologies have been used in previous studies (e.g., Dinehart & Kenny, 2015; Mathews et al., 2017), future studies should explore its utility and feasibility in different cultural and linguistic contexts.

2.2.6. Conclusions

Knowledge of specific aspects of reporting procedures seems to affect school staff's response to the potential cases of victimization they encounter at school. This knowledge (for instance, if the principal's consent is required in order to make a report) contributed significantly to predict reporting, even when controlling for other variables. Years of experience was relevant for detecting potential cases and spending more hours directly in contact with children was relevant for reporting. Therefore, future interventions should aim to provide more detailed and concrete information about reporting procedures and to explore ways of recreating the experience of detecting and reporting, particularly in a context in which detection procedures may have to be carried out online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This would help to overcome fears and barriers to identifying children at risk and to notifying the corresponding authorities about their situation.

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Table 15. Sampling strategy.

District	Total schools <i>n</i> (%)				Schools invited <i>n</i> (%)				Schools participating <i>n</i> (%)			
	Total	Public	Private	Semi	Total	Public	Private	Semi	Total	Public	Private	Semi
1. Ciutat Vella	18 (5.37)	11 (61.11)	0 (0)	7 (38.88)	2 (5.26)	1 (50)	0 (0)	1 (50)	1 (5.56)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (100)
2. Eixample	42 (12.53)	13 (30.95)	2 (4.76)	27 (64.28)	5 (13.15)	2 (40)	0 (0)	3 (60)	2 (11.11)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (100)
3. Gràcia	27 (8.05)	14 (53.84)	1 (3.7)	12 (44.44)	3 (7.89)	2 (66.67)	0 (0)	1 (33.33)	2 (11.11)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (100)
4. Horta-Guinardó	37 (11.04)	20 (54.05)	1 (2.7)	16 (43.24)	4 (10.52)	2 (50)	0 (0)	2 (50)	3 (16.67)	2 (66.67)	0 (33.33)	1 (100)
5. Les Corts	19 (5.67)	7 (36.84)	3 (15.78)	9 (47.36)	2 (5.26)	1 (50)	0 (0)	1 (50)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
6. Nou Barris	37 (11.04)	23 (62.16)	0 (0)	14 (37.83)	4 (10.52)	3 (75)	0 (0)	1 (25)	4 (22.22)	3 (75)	0 (0)	1 (75)
7. Sant Andreu	32 (9.55)	19 (59.37)	0 (0)	13 (40.65)	4 (10.52)	2 (50)	0 (0)	2 (50)	2 (11.11)	1 (50)	0 (0)	1 (50)
8. Sant Martí	47 (14.02)	31 (65.95)	0 (0)	16 (34.04)	5 (13.15)	3 (60)	0 (0)	2 (40)	2 (11.11)	2 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)
9. Sants-Montjuïc	35 (10.44)	21(60)	0 (0)	14(40)	4 (10.52)	2 (50)	0 (0)	2 (50)	2 (11.11)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (100)
10. Sarrià-Sant Gervasi	41 (12.23)	7 (17.07)	2 (4.87)	32 (78.04)	5 (13.15)	1 (20)	0 (0)	4 (80)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Total	335 (100)	166 (49.55)	9 (2.68)	160 (47.76)	38 (11.34)	19 (50)	0 (0)	19 (50)	18 (47.37)	8 (44.44)	0 (0)	10 (55.56)

Note. Desired sample size was $n = 386$ participants from 38 schools. Actual sample size is $n = 184$. Average participants per school: 10.22, $SD = 0.58$.

Table 16. Comparison of the results of the analyses with the raw data (all complete observations for each analysis) and multiple imputation ($m = 10$).

Knowledge statements	<i>Raw data</i>				<i>Multiple imputation ($m = 10$)</i>				<i>Missing n (%)</i>
	χ^2	<i>V</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	χ^2	<i>V</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	
31.	0.14	.03	-	-	0.16	.03	-	-	6 (3.3)
32.	2.94	.13	-	-	1.23	.11	-	-	5 (2.7)
33.	1.91	.10	-	-	0.74	.11	-	-	4 (2.2)
34.	3.36	.14	-	-	1.53	.14	-	-	9 (4.9)
35.	3.51	.14	-	-	1.22	.13	-	-	10 (5.4)
36.	0.004	.00	-	-	0.05	.02	-	-	10 (5.4)
		5							
37.	0.41	.05	-	-	0.22	.06	-	-	11 (6.0)
38.	1.92	.11	-	-	0.72	.08	-	-	7 (3.8)
39.	3.43	.14	-	-	0.92	.11	-	-	9 (4.9)
40.	5.29	.17	-	-	1.41	.15	-	-	6 (3.3)
41.	1.75	.10	-	-	1.04	.12	-	-	14 (7.6)
42.	0.65	.06	-	-	0.22	.08	-	-	11 (6.0)
43.	1.13	.09	-	-	0.08	.07	-	-	32 (17.3)
44.	5.83	.19	-	-	1.69	.15	-	-	13 (7.6)
45.	0.31	.04	-	-	0.19	.05	-	-	11 (6.0)
46.	0.12	.03	-	-	0.23	.04	-	-	11 (6.0)
47.	0.69	.06	-	-	0.23	.06	-	-	8 (4.3)
48.	0.90	.07	-	-	0.22	.08	-	-	9 (4.9)
49.	2.49	.12	-	-	0.83	.11	-	-	11 (6.0)
50.	3.44	.14	-	-	1.30	.15	-	-	12 (6.5)
51.	0.15	.03	-	-	0.05	.12	-	-	5 (2.7)

52.	3.60	.14	-	-	1.21	.14	-	-	2 (1.1)
53.	1.47	.09	-	-	0.39	.07	-	-	5 (2.7)
54.	8.98**	.23	1.28 (0.57-2.87)	2.51 (0.66-9.59)	3.67**	.22*	1.31 (0.60-2.91)	2.13 (0.85-5.35)	7 (3.8)
55.	9.73***	.24	0.54 (0.18-1.59)	5.63 (0.94-33.77)	3.54*	.21*	0.67 (0.25-1.81)	3.84 (1.00-14.75)*	9 (4.9)
56.	8.65**	.23	2.23 (0.65-7.60)	0.90 (0.20-3.98)	2.13	.17	-	-	14 (7.6)
57.	2.08	.11	-	-	0.97	.09	-	-	10 (5.4)
58.	4.20	.16	-	-	0.90	.12	-	-	13 (7.6)
59.	3.47	.14	-	-	0.87	.13	-	-	8 (4.3)
60.	13.32***	.28	1.16 (0.40-3.39)	4.62 (1.07-19.99)*	4.64**	.25*	1.13 (0.39-3.23)	3.06 (1.002-9.32)*	8 (4.3)
<i>Other reporter characteristics</i>									
Have been trained	3.48	.14	-	-	1.42	.13	-	-	5 (2.7)
Self-confidence (minors)	0.48	.05	-	-	0.42	.05	-	-	4 (2.2)
Self-confidence (families)	3.21	.14	-	-	1.55	.13	-	-	5 (2.7)
Referent person	5.69	.18	-	-	2.61*	.19	-	-	4 (2.2)
Knows protocol	1.55	.10	-	-	0.73	.08	-	-	28 (15.2)
Gender	2.47	.12	-	-	-	.11	-	-	1 (0.01)
Level	2.79	.09	-	-	-	.09	-	-	1 (0.01)
Years of experience ^a	16.07***	.08	1.03 (0.99-1.08)	1.03 (0.97-1.10)	-	.10	1.05 (1.01-1.09)*	1.02 (0.98-1.07)	4 (2.2)
Hours a day with students	23.47***	.26	-	-	-	.26	-	-	3 (1.6)

Less than 4 hours			2.76 (0.74-10.32)	4.53 (1.01-20.42)	10.18** *	3.46 (0.93-12.91)	2.01 (0.75-5.47)	
Specific/Sporadic			1.07 (0.47-2.48)	0.22 (0.03-1.57)		1.14 (0.52-2.49)	0.16 (0.03-0.85)*	
<i>Intercept</i>	-	-	1.26 (0.51-3.13)	0.06 (0.01-0.36)***	-	-	0.97 (0.41-2.28)	0.11 (0.03-0.37)***

Note. Statistical significance shown by multiple stars: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. In detection 4 (2.2%) observations were missing, in report 5 (2.7%). In model 1, total missing observations were 24(13%). In model 2, total missing observations were 13(10.9%).

^a Mean (SD), comparison made by Kruskal Wallis χ^2 test and η^2 as effect size.

Table 17. Results of the logistic regression models to test the influence of knowledge in detecting (non-detectors vs. inconsistent and consistent reporters) (Model 1) and reporting (inconsistent vs consistent reporters) (Model 2) potential victimization cases with multiple imputation (m = 40).

	<i>Model 1 (n = 184)</i>	<i>Model 2 (n = 136)</i>
	<i>e^β (95% CI)</i>	<i>e^β (95% CI)</i>
<i>Intercept</i>	0.98 (0.42 - 2.30)	0.11 (0.03 - 0.37)***
24. In most cases, child welfare services interventions are not good for the minor's well-being	1.25 (0.57 - 2.74)	2.14 (0.84 - 5.45)
25. If the informant wishes to report anonymously, he/she may do so	0.75 (0.27 - 2.09)	3.93 (1.01 - 14.21)*
30. The school principal's consent must be obtained before reporting	1.14 (0.40-3.20)	3.03 (1.01 - 9.04)*
Years of experience	1.05 (1.01-1.09)*	1.03 (0.98 – 1.07)
<i>Hours a day in charge of groups of students (Reference = Four hours or more)</i>		
Fewer than four hours	3.47 (0.94-12.87)	2.06 (0.77-5.40)
Specific or sporadic contact	1.13 (0.51-2.47)	0.14 (0.03-0.72)*

Note. Pooled Nagelkerke's R² for model 1: .12, for model 2: .36

2.3. Study 3: Why do school staff sometimes fail to report potential victimization cases? A mixed-methods study

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2.3.1. Abstract

Schools are in a position to connect children and adolescents suspected of being victims of violence with an external source of support by making referrals to external agencies. However, several studies have identified obstacles that hinder early reporting among school staff members. Very few studies have applied a mixed method approach to try to understand this sensitive issue. The current study used this approach to analyze to what extent the students suspected of being victimized match the ones reported by active school staff members in Spain ($n = 453$, 83.5% females, age: $M = 42.23$, $SD = 9.46$). We classified the reasons given for not reporting the potential victimization cases encountered and made comparisons to determine whether there were differences in the level of knowledge, or in the sociodemographic characteristics, of respondents who gave different reasons for not reporting. Although 73.5% of school staff members had detected at least one potential case, 40.8% of them referred it to an external agency. The most common reasons for lack of reporting included deciding not to do so once concerns had been shared within the school and believing that one must be certain or that only serious violence should be reported. The findings of this study may help to further understand the decisions not to report certain suspicions of potential victimization cases to external agencies by school staff. There is an urgent need to raise awareness about the duty to report these concerns to external agencies, even in the absence of agreement from the school management team. Members of school staff need to be strongly encouraged to become familiar with the existing protocols. Keywords: victimization; violence; children; school; report.

2.3.2. Introduction

With the ultimate aim of protecting children, in many locations (such as the one where this study was performed) adults are obliged to report to the authorities not only victimizations that they are directly aware of, but also any suspicions they may have that a child is at risk of suffering interpersonal violence. Several authors have proposed that reporting potential cases of victimization (as just defined) to specialized agencies such as social services is the best way to connect victims with a source of help (Mathews & Bross, 2008; Wekerle, 2013). Nevertheless, most people tend not to report concerns to these agencies because of misconceptions, like thinking that a child would be automatically removed from home if they were being maltreated (Walsh & Jones, 2015). This has been confirmed by professionals working with children on an everyday basis (Feng et al., 2010).

Within this context, schools have been defined as one of the governments' main tools to ensure that children's rights are upheld (McGarry & Buckley, 2013) by making the corresponding authorities aware of children at risk of suffering interpersonal violence. However, the education sector tends to present very low rates of reporting (Dinehart & Kenny, 2015) or fails to report suspicions properly (King & Scott, 2014). Several studies performed in school settings reported

that teachers were able to identify potential victims of violence but not able to respond effectively (Gilbert et al., 2008). Victims of different types of violence expressed regret that their teachers had not tried to reach out to them more (Buckley et al., 2007). Some authors have proposed that unseen victims, who are actually detected but receive no official action, tend to develop more complex traumas (Smyth et al., 2012) as they need to cope not only with the victimization itself but with the silence and complicity of society, and maybe their loved ones (Münzer et al., 2014). This also makes victims more likely not to disclose their experience nor ask for help (McElvaney et al., 2014). We thus need further understanding of the response given to potential cases of child and youth victimization encountered at school (Gilbert et al., 2008).

So why are school staff members finding it so hard to report children that they suspect to be at risk of violence? As a recent review has highlighted (Alazri & Hanna, 2020), it seems that different variables in the reporter (e.g., lack of knowledge), the victims (e.g., type of victim's family) or the system (e.g., school setting) play a role. Other factors reported in the literature have been the link and communication between social services and schools (Nohilly, 2019), and the challenges regarding the definition of what constitutes a suspicion (Crowell & Levi, 2012).

When addressing such a sensitive topic, some authors have suggested that traditional quantitative research may be somehow unable to capture the meanings that people attach to complex phenomena (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008). Silber and collaborators (2013) found that open-ended questions led to higher response rates than closed-ended questions when participants were asked about sensitive issues. The authors proposed that respondents may not find a response option that is in line with what they believe can explain their behavior when the answers are restricted to multiple choices. The consequential loss of significant information and quality of the responses given may affect the conclusions of research targeting the detection and early reporting of child and youth victimization.

Some qualitative studies have addressed this issue with different types of school staff members, such as teachers (Falkiner et al., 2017), counselors (Jenkins & Palmer, 2012) and social school workers (Weegar & Romano, 2019). These studies have reported findings in line with quantitative results, like a tendency to believe that there is a need for certainty before making a referral (Falkiner et al., 2017) and a lack of awareness about the reporting protocols (Jenkins & Palmer, 2012).

Nevertheless, scientific literature mixing up these approaches in order to gain insights integrating both qualitative and quantitative types of data is scarce. Mixed methods designs have been widely used to address similar reporting issues in the health sector (e.g., Feng et al., 2010) but few have addressed the reporting of potential victims of violence in the school sector (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010). Evidently, new studies using this methodology could confirm, question or enrich the conclusions obtained from previously conducted research.

The present study aimed to apply a mixed methods approach to explore to what

extent detected cases match cases reported by school staff members and the reasons behind deciding not to report the potential victimization cases encountered. This issue is even more relevant in a context in which all adults (but especially those working with children on an everyday basis) are required to report situations of potential risk of maltreatment or neglect to the authorities, as mandated by the Minors' Legal Protection Act of 1996 and the Modification of the Child Protection Services Act of 2015. This is why in our context the term "cases" is used to refer to situations that adults are obliged to report; that is, both when there is actual evidence of violence, and when there is a suspicion. More specifically, we wished to study the reasons that school staff give to explain their behavior when choosing not to communicate a potential case to an agency outside school. Since both quantitative (Alazri & Hanna, 2020) and qualitative studies (Falkiner et al., 2017) have proposed that the level of knowledge regarding child and youth victimization, its detection and the procedures to report it differ among respondents with different reasons for reporting, we also wanted to check whether the level of knowledge differs across respondents with reasons for not reporting their suspicions. Finally, we tested whether some of the respondents' characteristics, such as gender or years of work experience, had any influence on the reasons given for lack of reporting.

2.3.3. Methods

Sample

A total of 459 respondents returned or submitted questionnaires. Two responses were duplicated, and so were removed from the dataset, and four participants with over 50% of missing data were excluded, based on previous recommendations (Johansson & Karlsson, 2013). Thus, the final sample comprised 453 school staff members (83.53% females) between 22 and 65 years old ($M = 42.23$, $SD = 9.46$). Years of experience working with children ranged from 0 to 48 years ($M = 17.25$, $SD = 9.94$).

The respondents' distribution by demographic and professional variables is shown in Table 18.

Table 18. Sample characteristics.

	<i>n</i> (%)
Type of school	
Publicly funded	353(77.9)
Subsidized	100(22.1)
Level	
Kindergarten or Elementary School	380(83.9)
Middle or High School	52(11.5)
All levels	21(4.6)

Role	
Main teacher or professor	256(56.5)
Support staff	35(7.7)
Special education teacher or psychologist ²	44(9.7)
Management team	41(9.1)
Subject teacher (music, art, foreign language or religion)	58(12.8)
More than one role (e.g., teacher and headteacher)	14(3.1)
Other (e.g., secretary, chef)	5(1.1)

¹ This included supporting teachers, teacher assistants, and guardians during lunchtime and break time.

² Including specialists in different types of therapies, social workers and counselors.

Procedure

All procedures were conducted in accordance with the basic ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Assembly, 2013), respecting the ethical standards drawn up by the university's Committees on Bioethics (IRB00003099). All participants were informed of the aims and conditions of the study by means of a brief written invitation before consenting to respond to the survey. They were also told that they could withdraw from the study at any point. It was emphasized that participation was voluntary and that all data would remain confidential and accessible only to the research team. Other ethical aspects considered are detailed below in the descriptions of the data collection procedures in the two participating cities, Barcelona and Santander.

In Santander, schools were contacted through the governmental agency in charge of training active teachers in February 2018. The invitation summarizing the purposes and conditions of the study was sent by e-mail directly to potential participants registered in the agency, including a link to fill in the online version of the questionnaire. Participants were also informed that they had a month to complete the survey and that they could contact the governmental agency if they had any questions or wished to make any comments, or if they wished to withdraw from the study. In Barcelona, schools were contacted by phone in February 2016. The study was presented to a referent person by the first author, discussing aims, conditions, and compensations personally or by phone. Following previous suggestions by other authors (Hardesty et al., 2019), flexibility along the procedure was allowed within the defined research structure, to adapt properly to the school preferences and value participants' time and collaboration. Each designated school contact chose whether they preferred a printed or an online survey (49.45% of participants used the online format) and in which language (Spanish or Catalan: 79.35% chose to answer in Catalan). Deadlines and location for data collection were agreed with the designated school contact. Participants using the online version were proposed to answer the questionnaire on their spare

time and in the location of their choice, whereas schools that chose the printed version either left copies in the teachers' room or proposed a concrete space and time to fill in the surveys. All school staff members were warned about the deadlines for completing the questionnaires and provided with a contact phone-line and e-mail address, in case they had any questions or wished to make any comments, or if they wished to withdraw from the study. In return for their collaboration, schools were entitled to a report and a training session on child and youth victimization for all staff members.

Instrument

Based on previous studies with similar aims and drawing on current official conventions and protocols, a self-administered questionnaire was designed. The full protocol is available in its original language version at Authors (2018). The questionnaire included a definition of victimization based on Finkelhor's framework (2007) but also adapted to the mandatory requirements in the context of this research. The textual definition was *potential or actual harm (psychological or physical) caused by the intentional behavior (whether by action or omission) of individuals or groups of individuals towards someone younger than 18 years old, which interferes or might interfere with their optimal development in the short or the long-term*. The questionnaire also included 45 items measuring knowledge and experience regarding child and youth victimization, its detection and its reporting. "Knowledge" was conceived as beliefs which are correct and justified with some degree of confidence, and which influence behavior, as they are also linked to the capacity of the individual to act in situations related to these beliefs (Hunt, 2003). In the framework of this research, "experience" was defined as the personal event that took place in the individual's life when confronted with the possibility of reporting a student at risk of victimization. The instrument went through a multi-stage pre-test process involving a focus group with target population ($n = 8$ teachers) to ensure comprehensibility, clarity and relevance; cognitive interviews with experienced professionals ($n = 5$ psychologists or teachers specializing in vulnerable students) and reviews by two academic experts to assess content validity. Further information on the pretesting and previous studies performed with the instrument is available in Greco, Guilera & Pereda (2017).

Detection of potential cases. Participants were asked to answer the question "how many times during your career did you suspect that a minor might be being victimized?" by choosing among five response options that varied between "never" and "over 20 times", including the option "I do not know".

Reporting experience. Participants answered the question "have you ever reported a child suspected to be a victim of violence to external agencies outside school (e.g., Social Services)?" by choosing among three response options (i.e., "yes", "no" and "I never had any suspicions").

Perception of the intervention in reported cases. Only participants who had answered “yes” to the previous item were asked if they knew how the case or most cases had proceeded and if they believed the intervention had resulted in a good outcome for the minor.

Reasons for lack of reporting. Only participants who had answered “no” to the item about reporting experience were asked to answer the open-ended question “if you answered no, please describe briefly why you did not report your suspicions?” This item was designed in an open-ended format because this format has been shown to elicit more socially undesirable answers to threatening questions about sensitive issues than closed questions (Singer & Couper, 2017).

Knowledge. Knowledge was assessed using ten statements about victimization (e.g., “Victimization affects less than 10% of children in Spain”), ten statements about detection (e.g., “Most of the signs regarding child abuse are directly observable”) and ten statements about reporting (e.g., “Reporting a suspicion is legally mandated in Spain”). References for each knowledge statement are provided as supplemental material. Participants responded to each statement by choosing between “yes”, “no” or “I don’t know”. Every statement correctly classified was awarded 1 point and 0 points were given for wrong or “I don’t know” responses. A total score of ten points could be obtained for each section (i.e., victimization, detection and reporting). Each statement was based on current official protocols (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2007; Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, 2006) and on previous projects with similar aims in Spain (Cerezo & Pons 2004). The design was based on previous research performed in the international context (Dinehart & Kenny, 2015; Mathews et al., 2017; Walsh & Jones, 2015).

Other variables. Sociodemographic and professional information was also gathered (i.e., gender, age, whether if they were working in kindergarten, elementary or high-school level and years of experience working with minors).

Data analysis

Missing data. Before running the analysis, we found that 2.11% of data was missing due to non-response, varying between 0.02% and 0.07% missing data per variable. We then explored the missing data pattern using Little’s Missing Completely At Random test (MCAR), which was not significant ($p > .05$), suggesting that the pattern was MCAR. Thus, we chose the imputation method of fully conditional specification, since it has been shown to perform satisfactorily with our amount and type of missing data (Johansson & Karlsson, 2013). Data was imputed through the *mice* package (van Buuren et al., 2017) in R (R Core Team, 2019) and the imputed dataset was compared to the original one through plots, tables and chi-square comparisons, finding no statistically significant differences.

Quantitative analysis. To address our first research question (i.e., to what extent detected cases match cases reported by school staff members), we obtained descriptive statistics for the experience of detection and reporting of potential victimization cases for all respondents ($n = 453$). Then, we focused on respondents that had had suspicions but had never referred a case

outside school and responded to the item that asked the reasons why ($n = 124$). We analyzed the reasons why they chose not to report the case (see Qualitative analysis section). Once the responses were classified, we obtained all the descriptive statistics. To address the third and fourth research question (i.e., whether the level of knowledge or the sociodemographic characteristics differed among respondents with different reasons for lack of reporting) we compared the level of knowledge of respondents in each category through global and pairwise comparisons, using the Kruskal–Wallis test, based on recommendations for our type of study and sample (Lantz, 2013). In order to compare the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents for each category we used the Chi-square test for frequencies and Kruskal-Wallis test for age and years of experience. These comparisons would also provide evidence regarding the criterion validity of the category system created by means of the qualitative analysis. All statistical analyses were performed in R (R Core Team, 2019).

Qualitative analysis. In order to address our second research question (i.e., what are the reasons behind deciding not to report the potential victimization cases encountered), we created a system to categorize all the answers about why a suspicion had not been reported outside school ($n = 124$), based on the principals of conventional content analysis. Considering the instrument used, we relied on the guidelines developed by Singer and Couper (2017). To create the system of categories, the first author (AG) read all the responses using open coding to propose a first draft of a system with seven descriptive categories, with 12 subcategories to be more specific when the data allowed. Another author (EGP) checked the categories, reviewed the classification and proposed an extra category, as well as five subcategories. Both authors discussed the categories system and reached an agreement with six main categories and nine subcategories, considering the integrity of the research and the fit between the research purpose and the qualitative technique used (Hardesty et al., 2019). They agreed that the categories would not be mutually exclusive, i.e., an answer could be categorized in more than one category if the content provided enough evidence to do so.

Following this agreed classification system, the three authors (AG, EGP and NP) independently categorized all responses. With the aim of assessing the reliability of this analysis, we tested the inter-rater degree of agreement for each category through Kappa coefficients of concordance. The inter-rater agreement between authors ranged from substantial ($K = .71$, $CI = .62 - .81$) to almost perfect agreement ($K = .84$, $CI = .76 - .92$), which was considered satisfactory (Landis & Koch, 1977). For the answers in which the three coders differed in opinion ($n = 2$), one was solved by considering the classification of other similar cases and the other was discussed by the whole team until consensus was reached. The system of categories is displayed in Table 19 and the classification of all answers is available upon request. Since the categories were not mutually exclusive, we calculated the percentages based on all fragments classified ($n = 145$).

2.3.4. Results

Detection and reporting of potential victimization cases

With regard to our first research question (i.e., to what extent the cases detected matched the cases reported to external agencies), almost three quarters of the sample ($n = 333$, 73.5%) reported having at least one suspicion of a potential victimization case during their career. Most of them (80.1%) reported having had between 1 and 10 suspicions, while 7.3% reported having encountered between 11 and 20 cases and 6.8% over 20 potential cases. Approximately 40% ($n = 136$) of these participants said they reported their suspicions to an external agency outside school. Out of the respondents who said that they knew what had happened to the student following referral ($n = 101$), the majority considered that the referral had been good for the minor's well-being (39.0%), only 8.8% considered that it had worsened the situation, 22.1% thought it had made no significant difference and 4.4% did not know or felt unsure about it. All these percentages are illustrated in Figure 6.

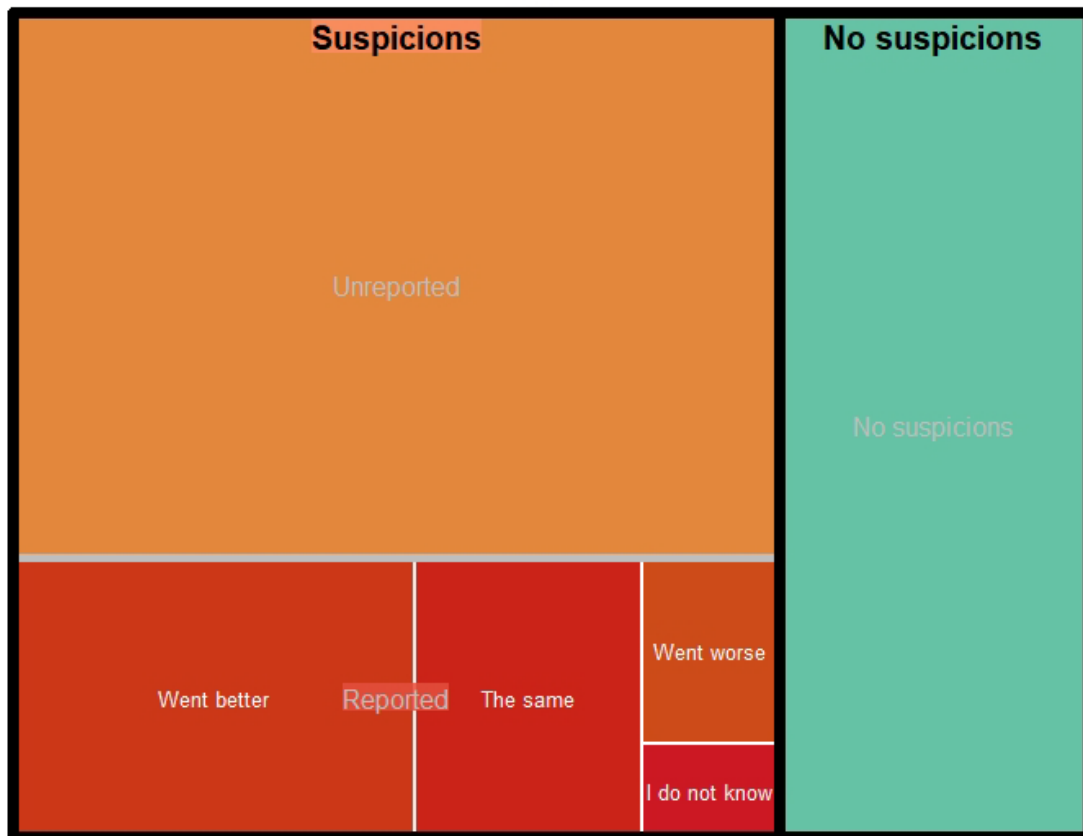


Figure 6. Treemap of suspected cases.

Reasons for lack of reporting

To answer our second research question regarding the reasons why respondents had not made a referral outside school, we focused only on participants who had not done so ($n = 124$). As shown in Table 19, respondents most commonly said that they had decided not to make a referral outside the school once they had shared their concerns within the school (42.1% of answers), followed by a feeling that the suspicions needed to satisfy certain criteria, such as being certain or being serious (25.5%). Lack of knowledge, feeling that making a referral outside school was not their responsibility and reporting inconsistencies (i.e., answering that they had never had a suspicion when they had answered that they had had at least one in the previous item) each represented between 12 and 14% of responses. Other reasons, such as fear of the consequences or intervening in the case in a different way, were identified in 6.2% of the responses. Each of the categories is described in more detail below.

Table 19. Categorization System.

Label	Subcategory	Verbatim example	Total <i>n</i> (%)
Lack of knowledge		“Because we did not know who to contact, we tried to the hospital” (respondent 168)	12(8.3)
Inconsistency		“I have never detected [cases of suspected victimization]” (respondent 374)	14(9.7)
Felt it was not their responsibility		“It was not my responsibility” (respondent 91)	13(9.0)
Decided not to make referral once concerns had been shared within the school	a. To a superior or child safeguarding team	“I referred it to the management team and they took care of it” (respondent 248)	61(42.1)
	b. To a colleague	“I told the teacher in charge of the child” (respondent 31)	
	c. It had already been referred	“Child welfare services were already aware of the case” (respondent 266)	
	d. Other people would make the referral	“Other people with higher responsibility did it in my place” (respondent 209)	
	e. We solved the problem within the school framework	“It was not considered necessary since the safeguarding team solved it” (respondent 212)	
	f. We agreed not to take further actions	“Because we talked it over within the school and with the family (warning)” (respondent 119)	
	g. My superiors did not support me	“The investigation and application of the child maltreatment protocol was not carried out, because the management team had blocked it” (respondent 351)	

Thought the suspicion must satisfy certain criteria	a. Being certain	“Lack of evidence” (respondent 241)	37(25.5)
	b. The case needs to be serious or severe	“The case was never as serious as it needed to be for referral” (respondent 165)	
Other		“High social controversy” (respondent 355)	8(5.4)

1. *Decided not to report the case outside the school after sharing concerns within school*

In over 42% of cases ($n = 61$), teachers and other school staff members reported sharing their concerns about a suspicion of a potential victimization case with other institutional members before they took the decision to communicate them to an agency outside the school framework. When they did this, several situations may have led them to decide not to report their suspicions to any external services, as described in the following subcategories.

a. Reporting to a superior or child safeguarding team. A large proportion of respondents ($n = 19$) communicated their concerns to a superior, like the headteacher, feeling that from that moment on they would not be responsible for what was decided regarding the potential referral:

I referred it to the child safeguarding team, which is the agency that should take the subsequent steps (respondent 53)

I referred it to the school management team, who would report it (respondent 248)

I left the case in the hands of the child safeguarding and management team (respondent 161)

b. Reporting to a colleague. Other responses ($n = 6$) reflected that participants chose to talk it over with the child’s main teacher, and then leave the decision for referral up to them:

I referred it to the child’s main teacher (respondent 7)

I did not refer the case personally to social services... I referred it to the child’s main teacher (...) (respondent 228)

c. The case had already been referred. Some respondents said that they were warned by other members of the school staff that an external service was already aware of the case ($n = 7$). This made them decide that there was no need to make a referral outside school.

Social services were already aware of the case (respondent 266)

The cases were already being treated by social services (respondent 430)

They were children that were already being monitored by an external agency (respondent 167)

d. Other people would do the referral. Some participants either knew or trusted that someone else would make the referral ($n = 11$), which discouraged them from pursuing it themselves:

Other people would take care of it (respondent 288)

Other members of the school staff with greater responsibility would do it in my place (respondent 209)

Most of them said that the referral was made after talking to their colleagues or the child safeguarding team ($n = 8$):

People in the management team did it (respondent 233)

The girl's main teacher made it [the referral] (respondent 182)

e. We solved the problem within the school framework. Answers classified under this subcategory ($n = 9$) implied that the school proposed a solution to the problem that was considered as a sufficient substitute for reporting, like sharing their concerns with the child's family or having an interview with the primary caregivers. After performing this action, they decided not to report the case elsewhere:

It was solved within the school (respondent 291)

We talked with the family (respondent 188)

The school was able to mediate and find a solution (respondent 75)

f. My superiors did not support my initiative. A few respondents ($n = 4$) explicitly stated that their superiors or child safeguarding team had prevented them making the referral:

Faced with my suspicions, the assessment and application of the maltreatment protocol was not pursued because the management team blocked it (participant 351)

The management team did not support me and I did not dare to make it [the referral] on my own (respondent 291)

Some participants even reported that they had had a hard time pursuing or coping with the disagreements they had with the management team or other school staff members:

I did not want to deal with my colleagues, superiors or the institution to which I belong and I consider them to be part of the maltreatment, since they do not look after the children's well-being (...) (respondent 443)

After following the protocol and even going beyond my role to comply with it, the management and child safeguarding team did not consider it necessary to inform other agencies (respondent 418).

Figure 7 aims to summarize the pathway followed from initial suspicions to referral, according to the results for this first category.

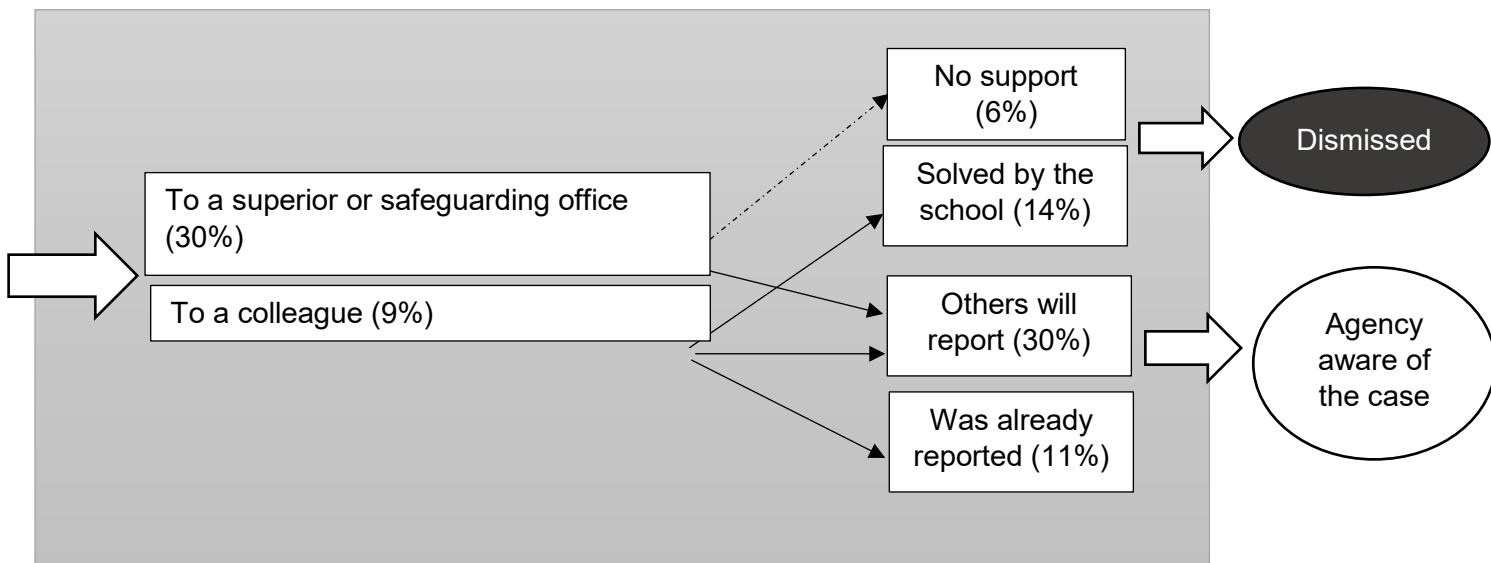


Figure 7. Path of suspected cases referred only within the school.

Note. Percentages are calculated based on the answers in each category ($n = 64$, because some answers were included in two subcategories, e.g. participant 248). Grey area represents the school framework. White arrows represent extremes of the path, i.e., ways in which the suspicion enters the circuit and leaves it. Black arrows represent paths within the school framework, among staff inside the school. Dotted arrow represents a path that is exclusively from a superior or the safeguarding office.

2. Thought that suspicion should satisfy certain criteria

The second most frequent reason for not making a referral (25.5%, $n = 37$) was the belief that the suspicions should satisfy certain criteria in order for a referral to be made to an agency outside the school.

a. Certainty. A substantial number of respondents ($n = 28$) said they had not referred the case outside of school because they were not certain about the victimization actually occurring:

I did not have enough signs to be sure of it, it was more a feeling than a certainty (respondent 175)

I was not sure that it was really happening (respondent 426)

I was not completely sure (respondent 374)

b. Severity. Another group of respondents ($n = 6$) stated that they had not made a referral because they felt the potential case was not severe enough to be dealt with by an external agency:

I did not consider it was that severe (respondent 47)

The case was never severe enough to report it (respondent 165)

I was never able to detect a severe case (respondent 68)

3. Inconsistencies

Quite a few responses (9.7%, $n = 14$) were not consistent with the answers given to previous items. That is, some respondents reported having had at least one suspicion of victimization during their career but never made a referral. However, when asked the open-ended question about reasons why they did not make a referral, they said that they had never had any suspicions.

4. *Felt it was not their responsibility*

Another group of respondents (9%, $n = 13$) indicated that they did not feel that communicating their suspicion about potential victimization cases to external agencies was their responsibility:

It is not my role at school (respondent 82)

I did not think it was my responsibility (respondent 293)

One respondent specified that they felt they were not entitled to make a referral outside of school by themselves

I am not entitled to [make a referral] (participant 383).

5. *Lack of knowledge*

Some of the answers (8.3%, $n = 12$) showed that respondents had decided to make a referral but did not know where or to whom the referral should be made.

To whom should we report our suspicions? We talked it over at the school, without knowing that it was victimization (respondent 32)

We did not know to whom [to address the referral] or the protocol. We tried the hospital (respondent 168)

Because of lack of awareness (respondent 315)

6. *Other reasons*

There were some answers (5.5%, $n = 8$) that we could not classify into any of the other categories. Some respondents took action by themselves and decided not to report their suspicions afterwards, such as:

I intervened by talking directly to the person hitting the child when I saw it happening (respondent 444)

I decided there was no need [to make a referral], according to the official document on reporting children at risk (respondent 410)

Some other answers implied broader issues, such as fear of the consequences or feeling that making a referral would enhance social reactions they did not want to deal with:

High social controversy (respondent 444)

Comparison of respondents according to the reasons for not making a referral

To assess our third research question, that is, whether participants giving different reasons for not reporting suspicions differed in terms of their sociodemographic characteristics or level of knowledge, in Table 3 we present the descriptive statistics of respondents in each of the categories

described. We only used the first category for each respondent, to avoid repeating information about individuals. We can see that respondents giving answers for the category “felt it was not their responsibility” were the youngest respondents on average. Those with answers that belonged to the category “lack of knowledge” were those with the fewest years of experience. On the contrary, respondents giving answers in the category “decided not to report outside once reported within the school” were those with the highest mean age and years of experience. Regarding gender or school level in each category, the distribution was similar to the distribution of the sample (see Table 20). None of the differences was found to be statistically significant.

Table 20. Distribution of respondents according to the main category assigned to their answer.

	Gender		Age	Years of experience	Level		
	Male <i>n</i> (%)	Female <i>n</i> (%)	Mean (<i>SD</i>)	Mean(<i>SD</i>)	Elementary or kindergarten <i>n</i> (%)	High school <i>n</i> (%)	Both <i>n</i> (%)
1. Decided not to make referral once the concerns had been shared within the school	8 (14.5)	47 (85.5)	42.9 (9.7)	18.55(9.64)	48 (87.3)	6 (10.1)	1 (2.6)
2. Thought the suspicion must satisfy certain criteria	7 (20.0)	28 (80.0)	40.7 (9.0)	16.57(10.63)	29 (82.9)	5 (14.3)	1 (2.8)
3. Inconsistencies	0 (0.0)	14 (100.0)	40.4 (8.0)	15.14(9.11)	10 (71.4)	3 (21.4)	1 (7.2)
4. Felt it was not their responsibility	1 (16.7)	5 (83.3)	37.5 (9.9)	14.50(10.95)	4 (66.7)	2 (33.3)	0 (0.0)
5. Lack of knowledge	3 (33.3)	6 (66.7)	41.4 (8.3)	14.33(5.02)	8 (88.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (11.1)
6. Other	1 (20.0)	4 (80.0)	40.0 (8.5)	15.50(19.09)	4 (80.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (20.0)
χ^2 (df)	$\chi^2(5) = 5.21$		$\chi^2(38)=33.30$	$\chi^2(35)=32.89$	$\chi^2(10) = 10.97$		

Note. Comparisons were made with chi-squared test for frequencies and Kruskal-Wallis test for quantitative variables.

Figure 10 shows the average level of knowledge about victimization for respondents in each category. When analyzing knowledge about victimization, respondents in the category “inconsistencies” displayed the highest level of knowledge and those with answers in the category “other” displayed the lowest level of knowledge.

In the same figure, it can be seen that the level knowledge regarding detection was relatively even across all categories. Interestingly, in terms of knowledge about reporting, respondents that fell into the category “lack of knowledge” displayed the highest level of knowledge on average and those that belonged to the category “felt it was not their responsibility” displayed the lowest.

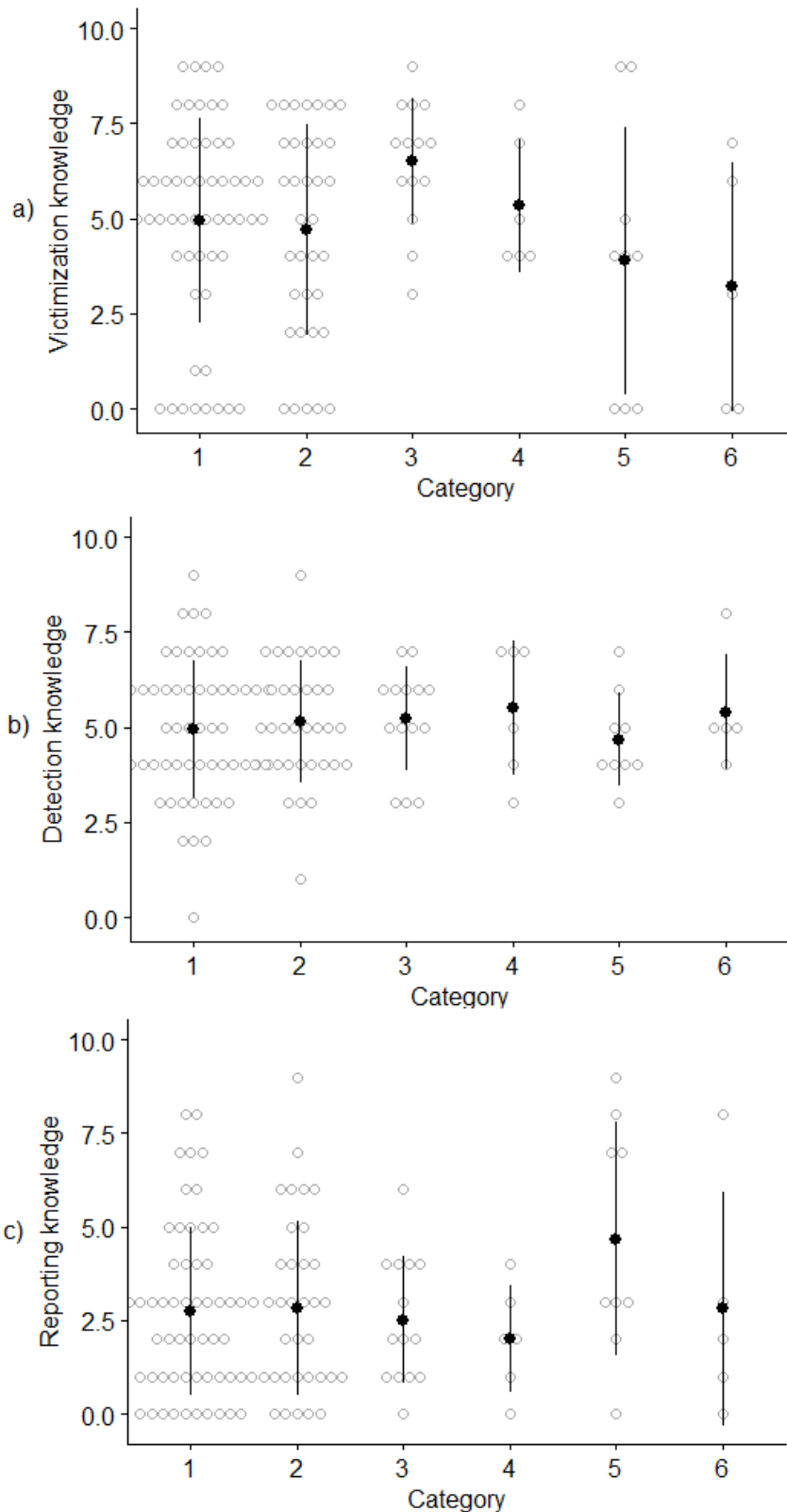


Figure 8. Level of knowledge of victimization (a), detection (b) and reporting (c) knowledge of participants assigned to each category (1 = Lack of knowledge, 2 = Thinks the suspicion must satisfy certain criteria, 3 = Inconsistencies, 4 = Felt it was not their responsibility, 5 = Lack of knowledge, 6 = Other reasons)

2.3.5. Discussion

The main aim of this research was to try to determine how many suspected cases of child victimization go unreported by schools, why and which variables might explain this. We also aimed to compare participants who gave different reasons for not reporting in terms of their sociodemographic variables or level of knowledge. In order to use the most suitable methodological approach to address each of these questions, we combined qualitative and quantitative techniques that allowed us to provide new and enriching insights to existing research.

Regarding the first research question (i.e., the extent to which school staff report cases of potential victimization to external agencies), most of the respondents in our sample had suspected at least once that a student under their care might be being victimized. The good news is that the proportion of suspicions of potential victimization cases reported found was slightly higher than in previous studies (Dinehart & Kenny, 2015). This could mean that awareness about the need for early reporting is actually increasing in school staff. Another piece of good news is that most respondents that followed a reported case thought this decision had benefited the child or youth involved. This is important information as it overturns some myths regarding the potential negative effect of social services interventions (Walsh & Jones, 2005).

Nevertheless, the majority of the suspected cases still go unreported, even in the context of this research in which teachers are obliged to refer any suspicion to the corresponding authorities. When analyzing the reasons that school staff gave to explain this behavior in order to answer our second research question, some of the participants mentioned reasons already cited in previous studies, such as the lack of knowledge (Falkiner et al., 2017; Jenkins & Palmer, 2012), or the belief that one needs certainty before making a referral (Walsh & Jones, 2015). Thus, our research adds evidence to the existence and persistence of these barriers. However, other reasons that have not been mentioned by previous studies also emerged.

Our study showed that, despite efforts to increase awareness around the need for early reporting by schools (Gilbert et al., 2008), some respondents still feel that this is not their responsibility. They felt they were not entitled to make a referral, or that only people with specific roles in schools could make this decision, or that it was not their responsibility (Alazri & Hanna, 2020). Interventions aimed at increasing early reporting of these cases should take this finding into account and include ways to empower school staff members to act on these suspicions.

Our results revealed other reasons why suspected victimization cases were not reported, including that once the respondents had shared their concerns with someone within the school framework, they decided not to pursue the referral any further. This situation has been reported in previous studies (Alazri & Hanna, 2020), but elucidating the particular dynamics that occur in the relationship among different members of the school when sharing these concerns was only possible through qualitative strategies. Figure 3 shows that a suspicion tends to be communicated

first either to a colleague (who is usually the main teacher of the student potentially at risk) or to a superior or child safeguarding team. When the safeguarding team, which has the most responsibility for deciding to make a referral, does not support the suspicion, the information does not reach any agency outside school, despite the legal framework that requires adults to communicate these situations. In addition, in some of these disagreements, the respondents felt that their superior or safeguarding team was deliberately allowing the victimization to keep occurring. It is important to increase awareness among school staff that they are entitled (and, in this context, mandated) to make a referral to the corresponding agency as individuals, even when their superiors do not agree with this procedure. Of course, a unilateral disclosure to a third party without the agreement of the school may be harder to deal with, as issues of confidence may arise (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010). However, school staff must rely on their compliance with the legal and ethical framework to pursue the referral if they consider that someone might be in danger.

Another common pathway shown in Figure 3 is that the school team proposes an action in order to address the potential victimization. Believing that a single (and according to the descriptions analyzed, quite simple) action will be sufficient to solve a complex problem such as students potentially exposed to violence entails many dangers, especially if it prevents children suspected to be at risk from reaching a source of help (Wekerle, 2013). But it could also discourage victims from asking for help (McElvaney et al., 2014), if the consequences of the intervention proposed by the school staff (e.g., talking with the family) causes the risk of further victimization for the children.

The remaining pathways lead to making a referral to an external agency. However, the individual who first suspected the victimization may always add information to both an already reported case or a case that will be reported by someone else from school. In this sense, it is important to strongly encourage all school staff members to be familiar with the protocol (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010) and to get involved in the referral procedure as much as they can. More fluid communication between school and agencies in charge of child protection would also be useful (Nohilly, 2019). Simultaneously, school staff should also offer help directly to the victim, as evidence suggests that victims would like more support from schools (Buckley et al., 2007). Finally, in a context in which school staff are mandated to report suspicions about children at risk, it is important to recall that governmental agencies are responsible for ensuring the access of this population to the current protocols and conventions.

Finding that a considerable number of school staff members answered inconsistently might be related to the discrepancies about what constitutes a *reasonable suspicion* (Crowell & Levi, 2012). Further research using a similar approach may shed light on how school staff members classify a child as potentially at risk.

Lastly, there were also some unexpected results regarding our third research question, that is, the contrast between participants with different reasons for reporting in terms of their

sociodemographic variables and level of knowledge. For instance, it was interesting that respondents in the category “lack of knowledge” were found to score the highest in terms of knowledge about reporting. This seems to suggest that even though knowledge is accurate, other factors may discourage school staff members from making a referral (Nohilly, 2019). Ways of coping with insecurity or perceptions of low self-efficacy need to be found to encourage the early reporting of students suspected to be at risk of victimization. In terms of the validity of our categorization, it is also important to point out that participants alleging a lack of knowledge were the least experienced, and respondents who felt that it was not their responsibility were the ones with the lowest levels of reporting knowledge.

Even though our study followed rigorous guidelines on both quantitative (Lantz, 2013) and qualitative analysis (Stenius et al., 2017) and responded to the call for more studies using these techniques (Alazri & Hanna, 2020), some limitations are worth considering. First, it must be borne in mind that the generalizability of qualitative findings depends on the context in which a phenomenon takes place, according to the proximal similarity model (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008). This is why we provided a detailed description of the situation in which this study took place, based on the model’s gradient of similarities criterion (i.e., time, place, people and setting), so that future research may use this information to assess to what extent the findings are likely to be replicated in another context. Second, the fact that the respondents were from different regions and were recruited using different procedures may hide an effect of the context. However, although the samples came from two different geographical areas and the recruitment procedures differed, no differences were found in terms of sociodemographic characteristics when comparing subjects in the different groups. Third, despite the similarities between our sample and school staff populations, the fact that the respondents were mostly teachers may have limited the views that were recorded in our study. Research including greater representation of other types of school workers may reach complementary conclusions. Finally, probably the most important limitation is that we did not record details about the family or socioeconomic background of children suspected to be at risk, an aspect that might also influence the reasons for not reporting. Our study focused on school staff variables so it is important to consider that excluding students’ characteristics like age or ethnicity might have hidden effects in reporting. Future studies might include a consideration of the influence of these characteristics on the decision not to report.

2.3.6. Conclusions

A considerable amount of suspected cases of child or adolescent victimization detected at schools is not being reported to external agencies. Most school staff that reported and followed up their suspicions perceived that the intervention was beneficial for the potential victim. School staff gave diverse reasons for failing to report a suspected case, such as being discouraged to pursue referral once their concerns had been shared with other members of the school staff, not

feeling entitled to make a referral on their own, not knowing how to proceed or thinking that their report had to fulfill certain criteria (i.e., certainty, seriousness). All school staff should be encouraged to become familiar with the reporting requirements and procedures, as well as to act on suspicions of students at risk of victimization, even if they feel unsure. Being aware of the internal school dynamics that might discourage staff from reporting and addressing misbeliefs could be an efficient way to promote the use of early reporting as a source of help.

2.3.7. References

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Table 21. Reference for each knowledge statement.

Knowledge statement	Source
61. Minors and adults are equally vulnerable to violence	Ajuntament de Barcelona (2007), p 9
62. If a behavior is harmful to the minor we consider it victimization, regardless of its intention	Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos sociales (2006), p 14
63. Child victimization can affect the minor's neurological development	Ajuntament de Barcelona (2007), p 25
64. We only consider victimization in a situation in which the minor's physical health is in immediate danger	Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos sociales (2006), p 30
65. Most parents who victimize their children are mentally or psychologically ill	Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos sociales (2006), p 17
66. Child victimization is always an action perpetrated by a grown-up against a minor	Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos sociales (2006), p 14
67. Physical maltreatment is the most frequent type of victimization	Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos sociales (2006), p 17
68. A minor who has suffered victimization is more likely to develop depression as an adult	Ajuntament de Barcelona (2007), p 25
69. Child victimization affects less than 10% of minors in Spain	Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales (2007), p. 17
70. A minor who has been victimized usually develops a feeling of rejection towards the perpetrator	Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos sociales (2006), p 17
71. Most signs of child victimization are directly observable	Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos sociales (2006), p 14-16
72. Only if I see more than one sign at a time can I suspect that a minor might be being victimized	Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos sociales (2006), p 14
73. Protecting minors' well-being is a legal obligation, even if it means getting involved in situations outside the school context	Ajuntament de Barcelona (2007), p 21
74. If the minor belongs to a culture that is more tolerant regarding abuse, we should not get involved	Cerezo & Pons (2004), Appendix (Training material)
75. The frequency of an aggressive behavior is crucial to suspecting whether a minor is being victimized or not	Ajuntament de Barcelona (2007), p 27
76. A minor growing up in a one-parent family is more likely to experience victimization	Cerezo & Pons (2004), Appendix (Training material)
77. A minor with low self-esteem is more likely to experience victimization	Ajuntament de Barcelona (2007), p 25
78. An isolated family is considered more likely to perpetrate victimization	Cerezo & Pons (2004), Appendix (Training material)
79. A family that shows excessive protection towards their minors is associated with stronger precaution regarding victimization	Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales (2006), p 31
80. It is easy to define whether a behavior can be considered abuse or not	Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales (2006), p 13

81. In case of severe abuse, the first institution outside the school that should be notified is the police	Ajuntament de Barcelona (2007), p 29
82. In case of mild abuse, the first institution outside the school that should be notified is child welfare services	Ajuntament de Barcelona (2007), p 29
83. We should only report a case if we know for sure that the minor is being victimized	Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales (2006), p 18
84. In most cases, child welfare services interventions are not good for the minor's well-being	Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales (2006), p 18
85. If the informant wishes to report anonymously, he/she may do so	Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales (2006), p 35
86. A report makes a judge aware of the case	Ajuntament de Barcelona (2007), p 29
87. If a suspicion turns out not to be true, the family is entitled to sue the informant	Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales (2006), p 18
88. Too many reports make the system collapse	Cerezo & Pons (2004), Appendix (Training material)
89. Reporting is up to the informant: the person who has the suspicion decides whether to report it	Ajuntament de Barcelona (2007), p 13, 23
90. The school principal's consent must be obtained before reporting	Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales (2006), p 35

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3. Discussion

This thesis studied the school staff members' experience and knowledge regarding children and youth victimization, its detection and its reporting. With the three proposed studies, we were able to assess how common is for school staff members to suspect that a child under their care might be going through some type of victimization, quantified the proportion of these suspicions that gets reported outside school and described what factors influence these procedures. Findings of each study are commented in this section, in light of the analyzed literature.

3.1. Prevention

Consistently with previous studies (AlBuhairan et al., 2011; Baginsky, 2003), most participants did not receive any training regarding children and youth victimization. Considering the beneficial effects of training in similar populations (Cerezo & Pons-Salvador, 2004; Hurtado et al., 2013; Mathews et al., 2017), including children protection subjects into initial (McGarry & Buckley, 2013; McKee & Dillenburger, 2009) or in-school training could be an effective strategy. Despite evidence regarding prevention programs not being very effective in terms of direct effects (Euser et al., 2015; Topping & Barron, 2009), according to a systematic review including 18 trainings improved knowledge, attitudes and competences were maintained over a year (Turner et al., 2017a) and they were particularly efficient when they included different professionals and promoted interactive discussions. Studies performed in countries in which training about violence against children and youth is mandatory can complement this, as they found that in addition to this pre-service training, school staff need to be constantly updated about child protection policies and protocols that are used within the school (McGarry & Buckley, 2013). It is also important to enhance communication among different agencies involved in child protection (Bourke & Maunsell, 2016; Nohilly, 2019; Turner et al., 2017) and to extend this type of training to school staff related to sports or physical activities (Appleton, 2013; Rossato & Brackenridge, 2009). In this sense, the present thesis included a significant proportion (i.e., around 10%) of guardians and monitors of leisure activities, which can be consider a differential aspect from previous research.

Another way in which this training can be provided in order to reach a greater audience is through online means. Recent experiences in this sense reported promising evidence (Ingram et al., 2019; Kenny & Abreu, 2016). Besides, in the current context an increased use of new tools and technology to improve training delivered online has been recently registered (Xu & Xu, 2019). In this sense, our research team also got involved in the creation of an online training course designed for teachers to perform asynchronously through an Erasmus+ project (see section 6.4). In the development of this training and the modules that composed it, we took into account the findings reported by the studies that composed this thesis, as well as previous evidence. For instance, we included detailed and concrete information about reporting, considering that according to our second study only specific knowledge about procedures to make a referral are relevant to explain reporting behavior among school staff members.

Finally, another important finding provided by the studies composing this thesis in terms of prevention is the need for school staff members to be able to share their experiences about previous cases of children or adolescence at risk within a trustworthy and non-judgmental environment. Studies one and three provided evidence that participants who reported cases perceived the intervention as mostly beneficial. This is consistent with international literature (Schols et al., 2013; Toros & Tiirik, 2016) and we hope it can help dispel misconceptions reported by previous studies, like believing a child would be automatically removed or underestimate the importance of peer-victimization (Alazri & Hanna, 2020; Edwards et al., 2020; Walsh & Jones, 2015).

3.2. Detection

Across the three studies that composed this thesis, detection was one of the outcomes that was more difficult to analyze and explain. Over 70% of school staff members said they encountered at least one potential victimization case during their working years, according to the data we presented in study 1 and 3. This percentage is similar to rates reported by some previous studies (Goebbels et al., 2008), but much lower than in others (Bibou-Nakou & Markos, 2017; Svensson et al., 2015). Of course the definition of what constitutes a suspicion might play a role (Crowell & Levi, 2012) as well as some cases' characteristics (King & Scott, 2014; Vanderfaellie, De Ruyck, et al., 2018). The only variable that was found to be related with detection both in studies one and two was the years of experience, which is logical since this opens a broader spectrum of possible cases. However, in study 1 there was evidence that school staff who considered themselves to acknowledge risk-factors at the family level tended to detect more cases, although the effect was moderate. As previous studies have warned that cases identified by school staff tended to include mostly child-centered indicators (King & Scott, 2014) it seems relevant to increase awareness among the indicators that can be found within the child's context. Even though workers in the school context do not always have direct access to this kind of information, the combination of their perspective with the ones of professionals that are more familiar with this type of signs, like social services (McDaniel, 2006) may be relevant to increase detection of potential cases.

Another way in which information coming from different sources can be merged in order to spot at children or adolescents potentially at risk for violence is linking administrative data that is already available in different agencies (Brownell & Jutte, 2013). Combining data across two or more datasets through unique identifiers or based on some basic sociodemographic factors (e.g., name, sex, and birth date) can be quite simple and rather automatically provide important, multi-dimensional information. These procedures have been widely used to achieve different aims, like including socioeconomically relevant information in health records (Krieger, 1992). Of course, many limitations in terms of privacy and data protection should be considered, but developing

such a system (and including school databases in this process) could add significant information to spot children that might be going through violent experience.

3.3. Reporting

Considering our findings and in line with previous studies (Dinehart et al., 2016; Feng, Huang, et al., 2010; Svensson et al., 2015), reporting still seems to be a challenging decision. Many barriers to report that were already identified in previous studies are still very prevalent in our sample, like lack of information, fear for the victim and for themselves, doubts in terms of respecting cultural differences and mistrust or frustration when dealing with child protection services (Brown, 2008; Bryant & Baldwin, 2010; Kenny, 2001). Knowledge about reporting presented the largest percentages of “I don’t know” answers or misconceptions in study 1. For instance, only 30.6% of participants in the first study were aware that reporting children at risk is mandatory, a misconception that was also found among the general public (Walsh & Jones, 2015). Yet only statements included in this section were relevant to explain the decision to report in study 2. Thus, it seems important to focus on giving access to concrete aspects of reporting to all school staff member in contact with children. Whether it is through training, in a meeting, as flashcards or hanging out infographics across the school, it is very important that every school staff member knows specifically how to deal with disclosure and/or suspicions, and who is the next person that needs to be informed about it. Protocols should be updated and accessible in all schools and the person responsible to deal with reports needs to be familiar with their duties and rights (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010; Lusk et al., 2015). A whole-school approach in which each school staff member knows their role in terms of child protection, but also feels supported by specialized teams, promotes a feeling of confidence both in students and adults (McGarry & Buckley, 2013) that might help to overcome the limitations found to report. In this sense, the role of principals seems crucial because participants in study 3 explicitly explain that reports were not made because of a blocking attitude from the principal’s team. This finding is mirrored in previous studies showing that over 65% of teachers feel their administration would not be supportive if they made a child abuse report (Kenny, 2004). Results of study 2 also suggest that acknowledging that principal’s agreement is not needed in order to pursue a report outside school seems to increase the likelihood of reporting. We can then conclude that the responsibility and potential of this type of school staff is key, so they need to be given the means and tools not only to feel self-confident about reporting but also to carry this message to the school staff they coordinate.

The influence of some variables, like gender or role in school are still not clear. Our findings are discrepant with some studies reporting that females tended to report more than males (Kenny, 2001; 2004). Further evidence should be collected in order to define the role of this variables. It could be possible that gender has an indirect effect on reporting or that implications of being male, female or other genders vary significantly across different contexts. For instance, during a training

with school staff performed within the framework of this thesis in Barcelona city, a male participant showed himself very capable of facing families that would accuse him of having reported them, whereas females tended to feel more intimidated. A colleague from this research team working in social services also explained that teachers tend to argue that they are the only professionals exposed to everyday contact with the family once the report is made. Future research including not only different type of school workers, but also different professionals involved in child protection may shed light on the influence of this kind of variables.

In fact, this lack of studies including all school staff in contact with children makes it hard to interpret the findings showing that workers who come into contact with children only specifically or sporadically (like counselors, principals, nurses, etc.). It is true that the more time we spend in contact with students, the broader the spectrum to observe signs of risk and hence to encounter and report potential cases. Yet, the fact that personnel who are not in direct contact with students on a daily basis are those responsible for making reports in many schools (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010; Lusk et al., 2015) calls for further attention to this finding.

According to study 3, the dynamics within school are particularly important to determine whether a concern might reach an agency outside school. School staff tend to report frequently within the school setting (Dinehart et al., 2016), either leaving the potential report on someone else's hands (Feng et al., 2010) or discarding the possibility of pursuing it beyond the school boundaries. Participants of study 3 declared that it is common to propose an intervention from the school framework that usually replaces the report. In many cases, this proposal was talking with the family about the potential victimization, which has already been reported by a previous study (Toros & Tiirik, 2016). However, studies performed with children or adolescence who were victims of violence suggest that this strategy should only be used in presence of the child (Buckley et al., 2007). It has also been shown that revealing information that was obtained in a trustworthy context to a third party without the individual's consent can be quite problematic (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010). It should also be taken into account the risk that it entails, particularly because there is evidence that this technique discourage victims to ask for help (McElvaney et al., 2014). Given that school staff may lack many of the required skills to deal with this type of cases (maybe with the exception of school counsellors), specialized professionals like therapists or forensic psychologists should be called to intervene when needed.

It is also important to encourage connections beyond school, with child protection services or other agencies (e.g., non-governmental organizations, leisure activity centers, health professionals, social services) in order to dispel misconception and become familiar with the role and dynamics of each service involved in children and adolescents' well-being (Bourke & Maunsell, 2016; Nohilly, 2019). Defining clear thresholds of what constitutes a suspicion, try to understand the dynamics of each context or create and use a common language and vocabulary (Haan et al., 2019) may be helpful to translate the whole-school approach to the community level.

In this context, not only the procedures should be clear but interagency trust is fostered and every adult feels responsible all along the way for the children and adolescents' development (Feng et al., 2010). In fact, the entire community could benefit from a shifting paradigm in which every adult is responsible for children and adolescents' wellbeing and development. In this framework, the conception of reporting can be proposed not as a heavy and frustration duty (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010) but more like a 'first step towards resilience' (Wekerle, 2013), as a way of asking for help for a child or a family that needs it. This could also prevent undesired consequences of reporting, like having a family feeling threaten by a school staff member who cares about their child's situations.

Acknowledging the complexity of reporting in the current context, Figure 8 aims to sum up the findings and proposals included in this section. In the studies that composed this thesis we mainly analyzed the individual variables that led to the decision of reporting, like being familiar with specific aspects of the protocol (as shown in study 2) or previous experience (as shown in study 1). Findings of study 3 may suggest that these variables combine with the effect of factors in different levels. For instance, working in a school that has a clear approach to address potential cases of victimization in which school staff feels supported when they need to deal with this type of issue may increase the likelihood of pursuing a report. This can also be interpreted in light of previous literature finding that communication among professionals involved in child protection can encourage and improve the experience of reporting, leading to more reports (Feng et al., 2010; Nohilly, 2019). Finally, if we can take this conception to the next level we would be able to include the whole community by making us all aware of the responsibility that we have for children and adolescents' development. In this sense, we can move forward to a perspective that considers report an act of protection, a bridge that joins a child and/or a family with the help they need to develop resilience and growth from a potentially traumatic experience (Wekerle, 2013).



Figure 9. Levels of variables influencing the decision to report.

3.4. Practical implications

The current thesis provided relevant information in order to design and develop interventions aimed at developing the potential schools have in terms of child protection. Many of the findings in these studies suggest that including simple actions within schools can positively impact school staff's detection and reporting abilities. For instance, the creation of safe-space to share concerns, fears, doubts, and experiences about previous reporting among school staff members can help dispel the misconception about bad interventions of child protection services. Schools can also include accessible information about its protocols and the necessary steps to report, in posters or hand out cards.

This research also highlighted the crucial role of principals. First of all, there is a persistent misbelief: around 40% of school staff think they need to have the principals' agreement in order to report outside school and an additional 40% assumed they did not know whether if this consent was necessary. Besides, participants who knew that this was a misconception were significantly more likely to report. School management teams need to be clear about their responsibilities and rights and those of the staff under their supervision regarding the reporting of potential cases of child victimization. It would also be helpful if school principals were provided with official specific training regarding violence against children and youth. This type of training can be embedded in the higher education training they usually take or could be included as a step before taking position of the school management team. Finally, some school staff actually declared that the attitude of principals sometimes had prevent them from pursuing a report. Thus, school principals have a huge responsibility in this regard: if they feel they are not able to deal with this type of issue either because of lack of time or resource, they need to transfer this responsibility to a specialized department, as some schools already do with counselors or child safeguarding teams.

Besides principals need to inform school staff members under their supervision which are the steps to take when a student discloses any type of victimization or when they suspect a child might be being victimized. It is important to highlight that even when the principal does not share the concerns of the school staff, they are entitled to contact social services to inform them about the potential case. Again, these procedures should be kept up to date.

It also seems that bullying concentrates a lot of attention, probably because is the kind of violence that occur within school settings. As commented in the introduction, the effects of bullying can be as devastating as any other type of victimization, so dedicating time and resource to deal with this type of violence within schools seems like an effective strategy (Cunningham et al., 2016). School staff needs training including concrete definitions of bullying to discriminate it from other types of violence or even other problems. Besides, it seems relevant to highlight the connection between victimization experiences of different types and across contexts. Frequently, victims of bullying are also victims of other types of violence so the way in which school staff choose to deal with bullying affects the way in which they address violence in general and vice-versa.

As previously stated, some interventions may also be done beyond school. Links between school, social services, and other institutions in contact with children should be reinforce. Social workers may come more often to schools, maybe do an activity so children and school staff can be familiar with their work and how to contact them. Students that are under residential care may invite other students to their residency, so children can also be familiar with this environment. The whole community needs to start valuing positively schools that have a clear policy towards violence against children, reports frequently to social services and is not afraid to address child protection issue. Currently some schools still fear that their reputation will be threaten if they dare to deal with such complicated issues (Lusk et al., 2015; Walsh & Farrell, 2008b).

Finally, the empowerment of children's voices seems crucial in order to early detect and report potential victimization cases. Including children's perspective in policies about violence against children, whether it is within the school, the community, the leisure activities or anywhere else can enrich any intervention targeting them. School staff, but also any grown up, can start by believing a child when they disclose any type of violent incident, showing them that we take their words seriously, that we listen, and we care. Materials aimed at promoting these attitudes and providing strategies to deal with disclosure and suspicions, such as those recently published in our country (Bravo Correa & Juárez López, 2021a, 2021b) are urgently needed and should be distributed or of easy access. Campaigns to create awareness regarding the consideration of the children's voice and perspectives should be promoted as a way of protecting them from violence.

In an effort to translate the findings of this thesis into concrete tools for school staff to detect and report potential victimization cases for school, we engaged in an Erasmus+ project entitled School Against Victimization from an Early age (SAVE). Through this project, we were able to

create an online training designed for any school staff member working in Europe, in a partnership with experts from other institutions. Four modules, each one focused on a different type of victimization and a final one aimed at developing resilience and post-traumatic growth, compose the course. They all start with a video about a real story, and they follow the same structure, providing concrete information about the signs to observe to detect and the steps to take to report. It is available free at <https://www.savetraining.eu/>, it can be done at users' own pace, and they do not need to give away any data to take the course or access their content. Figure 9 shows the statistics of people who accessed the course until May 2021. We hope that this tool contributes to develop the potential schools have to protect children and youth victims of violence.

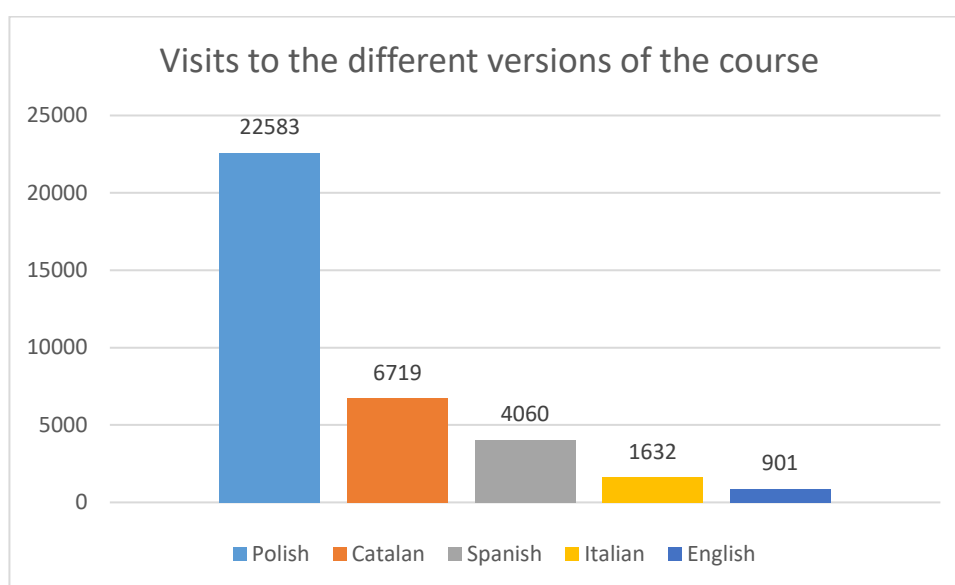


Figure 10. Visits to each of the available versions of the course.

3.5. Strengths, limitations and future research

One of the main strengths of this thesis about schools' role in the detection and reporting of children and youth potential victimization is that all type of school workers were invited. Another strong point is that each study that compose this thesis was designed within the developmental victimology framework, which allows considering any type of violence. The thesis was also an opportunity to propose training and reports for participating schools, which can be considered as a way of returning the investment. Finally, this thesis provided new and relevant findings for the field that were not captured by previous studies. The importance of the principal's role, how internal school dynamics may affect the decision of reporting outside school, the actual influence of the level of knowledge of some concrete aspects of reporting, the proportion of cases that are suspected but not reported outside school and the positive perception of social services interventions are a few examples of these achievements.

However, some limitations must be considered. First of all, the research focused on reporter's characteristics (e.g., school staff demographical data, previous training, knowledge, experience,

etc.), without including cases' characteristics. Since variables related with the type of violence, its severity, the age of the child, the family cultural background, and other aspects have been found to significantly explain the variance of reporting (Alazri & Hanna, 2020; Walsh & Farrell, 2008), it should be taken into account that respondents of this research may have based their answers in different cases. Besides, the fact of considering any type of violence may have hidden specific effects of each type of violent experience. Future research including variables related with case characteristics and other particularities may complement the findings reported in the present thesis.

Second, because none of the available instruments entirely covered our objectives and we needed a questionnaire adapted to our context, we created a new questionnaire based on previous studies with similar aims (Hurtado et al., 2013; Mathews et al., 2017). Although the instrument was carefully pre-tested and this stage provided some evidence about its validity, measurement properties may affect some of the results. Further applications of the instrument and studies about its psychometric properties may add to the results reported in the current research.

There are also several issues regarding the generalizability of the findings. Since data about how many school staff per school was invited was not available, we were not able to determine what proportion of the whole school staff members agreed to participate in each school. In addition, we could not test for differences between those who agreed to participate and those who declined. In lack of this information, we could not obtain a participation rate per individual. Besides, the estimated sample size to consider our sample representative per district and type of school was not achieved in some districts, particularly those with the highest level of income and education according to the Observatori de Districtes⁶. Hence, some sectors of the target population may have been underrepresented in the current thesis. Finally, in study 3 we combined samples from different regions and with different data collection procedures, so the problem of representativity became even more complex. Even though our sample characteristics are similar to previous studies (Bibou-Nakou & Markos, 2017; Dinehart et al., 2016; Schols et al., 2013), we expect to be able to improve these aspects in future studies.

Another limitation was the proportion of missing responses found, particularly in one of the items of the questionnaire (i.e., 'States that there is a protocol for reporting at their school'). Despite the strategies used in order to prevent this (de Leeuw et al., 2008), the location of some items after previously filtering questions might have led to skip it to participants. Missing data was handled differently across each study, taken into account the available methods and more appropriated solutions, which might have affected the results. Even though the chosen method to handle missing data in each article is explained in detailed, including its advantages and

⁶ According to the data provided by the Observatory of Districts, Barcelona City Hall, available at <https://www.bcn.cat/estadistica/angles/documents/districtes/index.htm>

limitations, the problem of missing data needs to be considered when interpreting the reported findings.

Finally, the current thesis may open the scope for new research lines. Aside from the aforementioned proposals, one of the main lessons we learned is that more studies shall include the child's voice. The perspective of children and adolescents can be very useful to capture valuable information that would be unavailable otherwise. Whether if they are victims, perpetrators, bystanders or even if they did not have any direct experience with violence, children and youth are entitled to say how they would like to be treated in that situation, how they would feel safe at school, and how they would want adults to deal with the issue. Another important point that could be specifically addressed in future studies is violence that occurs between adults and children or adolescents within the school. Either in the way of victimization from adults to children (Chen et al., 2020; Koçtürk & Yüksel, 2018) or from students to teachers (Sorrentino & Farrington, 2019), recent studies suggest this is a quite frequent, though understudied phenomenon. Another focus that could be strengthened is how decisions taken within the school setting can impact violence within other contexts. For instance, there is an interesting study proposing that the day in which school reports cards are released may increase the risk of physical punishment by caregivers (Bright et al., 2019).

4. Conclusions

One of the main findings of this research is that most school staff (over 70%) had suspected at least once during their professional experience that a child under their care might be going through some kind of victimization. However, the majority of these suspicions is not reported outside school, as only around 40% of participants that had suspected at least one potential victimization case have ever reported any of these concerns to an external agency.

The decision to report seems to be related with specific knowledge about reporting procedure, like whether if the principal's consent is needed, if it is possible to report anonymously, or if families with cultural background that tolerate violence should be prevented of interventions. Considering this effect of knowledge found in the decision to report and the low percentage of school staff that had received any training (around 10%), training could be beneficial for this population. Interventions based on these findings should focus in the specific procedures to refer a case to an external agency.

Out of those who reported, almost 40% considered that the intervention made thanks to the report was beneficial for the child's well-being, compared to another 40% who perceived that it made no difference, and the remaining 20% that thought it was negative. This finding can help dispel the misconception about child protection services interventions being harmful for the children and families at risk. Programs to prevent and treat violence against children from school should include a way for those who already had experience in detecting and reporting children at risk to a specialized agency to share their impressions with their colleagues. Training and clear guidelines seems also particularly important for school staff who are usually responsible for reporting outside school (e.g., principals), which were less likely to report according to our study.

Some evidence was also found that other variables, like gender, years of experience, and the role in school also influence the decision to report. Males, workers with more years of experience, and those who spent at least 4 hours a day in direct contact with children were significantly more likely to report. Future research could analyze furtherly these links to check for indirect or casual effects through longitudinal designs.

Most of participants that decided not to report a suspicion to an external agency declared they decided not to do so after sharing their concerns within the school. This potential report within the school was either handled or done by someone else (i.e., colleague or superior), replaced by a measure like talking with the child's family, or discarded if superiors did not agree, or if the child was already in contact with social services. Thus, it is important to revise internal dynamics that take place in each center and establish a clear policy regarding child safety for school staff to rely in these standard and agreed guidelines rather than in personal opinions or reactions from their colleagues or superiors. This measure could also help to cope with prevalent misconceptions, like believing that the report needed to fulfill certain requirements in terms of severity or certainty. Around 10% of participants that admitted not to report a suspicion to an external agency responded inconsistently, which may also show divergences or difficulties in the definition of a

suspicion, that can probably be overcome with the establishment of an explicit procedure or relying in a clear reference point to discuss doubts and concerns. In fact, almost 60% of participants could identify a reference point to discuss violence against children within school but less than 30% were aware about the existence of a reporting protocol within their school. Other reasons not to report were feeling they were not responsible for this type of decision, lack of awareness about the procedures to report, and fear.

In sum, considering all of these findings taken together, training to all school staff about children and youth victimization should be provided, focusing on the aspects of knowledge that seem to increase early report (e.g., procedures, requirements). Interventions aimed at sharing reporting experiences to dispel misconceptions about their negative impact or ways of reproducing these situations through virtual reality can contribute to increase early reporting of potential victimization cases from school. It could also be important to revise (and re-define, whenever needed) the dynamics within school, including who is responsible of reporting, what are the rights and duties of the reporters, and specific information about who, when and where to report.

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Appendices

**CUESTIONARIO SOBRE
CONOCIMIENTO Y EXPERIENCIA EN
VICTIMIZACIÓN INFANTIL Y
ADOLESCENTE, SU DETECCIÓN Y
NOTIFICACIÓN PARA PERSONAL
ESCOLAR**

VERSIÓN EN CASTELLANO

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Año: 2017



Cuestionario sobre conocimiento y experiencia en victimización infantil y adolescente, su detección y notificación para personal escolar

En este documento se presenta el instrumento utilizado en el marco de la investigación “La detección y notificación de la victimización infantil y adolescente en las escuelas de Barcelona” llevada a cabo por el *Grup de Recerca en Victimització Infantil i Adolescent (GReVIA)* de la Universidad de Barcelona a lo largo del año 2016.

El cuestionario es auto-administrado y consta de un total de cuarenta y cinco ítems. Está dividido en cuatro secciones: A. Datos sociodemográficos (compuesto por 6 ítems); B. Victimización (compuesto por dos sub-secciones con 3 y 10 ítems cada una, respectivamente), C. Detección (compuesto por dos sub-secciones con 4 y 10 ítems cada una, respectivamente), D. Notificación (compuesto por dos sub-secciones con 2 y 10 ítems cada una, respectivamente). Las sub-secciones BII, CII y DII están compuestas por diez frases para evaluar el conocimiento en Victimización, Detección y Notificación, respectivamente.

En un primer apartado se adjunta una copia para aplicar la versión impresa del cuestionario auto-administrado en castellano y, en un segundo apartado, se presenta la plantilla de corrección en la cual se indican cómo clasificar adecuadamente las frases de los tres sub-apartados de frases (i.e., BII, CII y DIII) que evalúan el grado de conocimiento. El número uno (“1”) indica que se ha identificado la veracidad de la frase, es decir, si es verdadera (“Sí”) o falsa (“No”). El número cero (“0”) indica el desconocimiento o que se ha caído en una falsa creencia. Se pueden obtener hasta un máximo de 10 puntos en cada uno de los sub-apartados, sumando un punto por cada frase adecuadamente clasificada. Asimismo, se puede obtener un puntaje total (i.e., de los tres sub-apartados) de hasta 30, sumando los puntajes obtenidos en cada sub-apartado.

En caso de querer aplicar la versión en línea, por favor, póngase en contacto con el *Grup de Recerca en Victimització Infantil i Adolescent* (www.ub.edu/grevia).

1. Cuestionario

Buenos días/tardes,

Le invitamos a participar voluntariamente en un estudio que se está realizando en la Universidad de Barcelona sobre la **detección de la victimización infantil** en las escuelas de la ciudad de Barcelona. Su colaboración es fundamental para poder llevar a cabo el estudio.

Por favor, lea atentamente la siguiente información. Sus **respuestas** serán tratadas de forma **anónima** y únicamente se utilizarán con finalidades docentes y de investigación. El objetivo es conocer su opinión y experiencia sobre la victimización infantil. Por favor, responda con la máxima sinceridad posible.

Rellenando el cuestionario usted acepta que:

1. Entiende qué implica su participación,
2. Está al corriente de que su participación es anónima y voluntaria, y
3. Quiere participar en el estudio

A. DATOS GENERALES

En este apartado preguntaremos algunos datos sobre usted, para poder caracterizar la muestra y relacionar las características de los participantes con otras preguntas.

- 1) Sexo: Hombre Mujer
- 2) Edad:
- 3) Nombre de la escuela donde trabaja:
- 4) Cargo que desempeña:
- 5) Etapa (puede señalar más de una): Infantil Primaria ESO Bachillerato
- 6) Años de experiencia en el trabajo con menores (cualquier puesto):

B.I. VICTIMIZACIÓN

En este apartado buscamos conocer su experiencia, opiniones y/o inquietudes sobre la victimización. Si alguna pregunta o concepto le resulta desconocido o confuso, no se preocupe, sólo trate de rellenar las respuestas según su intuición, por favor.

Encontrará una breve definición del concepto, tres preguntas y diez afirmaciones a las que habrá de dar o no su acuerdo, según considere.

Victimización Infanto-Juvenil: Acción u omisión de conducta realizada intencionalmente por un individuo o grupo de individuos sobre un menor de 18 años, que produce consecuencias físicas y/o psicológicas, o podría producirlas, tanto a corto como a largo plazo, reduciendo su bienestar y/o interfiriendo en su desarrollo óptimo.

- 1) ¿Conocía el concepto de victimización antes de leerlo aquí? Sí No No estoy seguro/a
- 2) ¿Ha recibido alguna formación sobre victimización infantil? Sí No No estoy seguro/a

Sólo si ha respondido que **sí**, conteste las siguientes preguntas, por favor:

- a. ¿Dónde ha recibido la/s formación/es?

.....

¿Quién estaba a cargo de la/s formación/es? Señale todas las opciones que considere:

- Profesional de institución pública (servicios sociales, ayuntamiento...)
- Profesional de un centro privado (ONG, fundación especializada...)
- Otros. ¿Quién?.....
- No lo sé

Si ha respondido que **no** o que **no está seguro/a**, pase a la pregunta 3 de este mismo apartado, en la página siguiente, por favor.

3) Por favor, enumere los tipos de victimización infantil que conoce según su percepción. Si no conoce ninguno, escriba "No sé":

.....

.....

.....

B.II ¿ESTÁ DE ACUERDO CON LAS SIGUIENTES FRASES? *Recuerde: no hay respuestas correctas/erróneas.*

	Sí	No	No sé
1) Los menores son igualmente vulnerables frente a la violencia que los adultos.			
2) Sea una conducta intencional o no, si es perjudicial para el menor debe considerarse victimización.			
3) La victimización infantil puede afectar el correcto desarrollo neurofisiológico del niño/a.			
4) Podemos calificar una situación de victimización sólo si pone en peligro inmediato la salud física del menor.			
5) En su mayoría, los padres que victimizan a menores son personas que presentan una enfermedad psicológica o mental.			
6) La victimización infantil consiste siempre en una acción violenta que comete una persona contra un menor.			
7) El tipo de victimización infantil más frecuente es el maltrato físico.			
8) Un/a menor que ha sufrido victimizaciones tiene más posibilidades de sufrir un trastorno depresivo en la adultez.			
9) La victimización infantil es una problemática que afecta aproximadamente a menos de un 10% de los niños en España.			
10) Un menor que ha sufrido victimización suele desarrollar un sentimiento de rechazo hacia el perpetrador/a.			

C.I DETECCIÓN

En este apartado buscamos conocer su experiencia y opiniones respecto de la detección de la victimización infantil en su trabajo cotidiano.

Encontrará cuatro preguntas y diez afirmaciones a las que habrá de dar su acuerdo o desacuerdo, según considere.

1) En sus años de experiencia trabajando con niños/as, ¿cuántas veces ha sospechado que un/a niño/a podía estar siendo victimizado?

- Nunca Entre 1 y 10 veces Entre 11 y 20 veces Más de 20 veces No lo sé

2) ¿Considera que conoce lo que se necesita observar en un menor para detectar un caso de victimización infantil?

- Sí No No estoy seguro/a

3) ¿Considera que conoce lo que se necesita observar en una familia para detectar un caso de victimización infantil?

- Sí No No estoy seguro/a

4) ¿Considera que existe en el centro donde trabaja un/a referente al que consultar sobre este tema?

Sí No No estoy seguro/a

Si ha respondido que **no** o que **no está seguro**, pase al siguiente apartado (C.II), por favor

Sólo si ha respondido que **sí**, por favor, indique: ¿Quién/es es/son el/los referente/s?

Director/a Psicólogo/a Educación Especial No lo sé
 Otro. ¿Quién?

C.II ¿ESTÁ DE ACUERDO CON LAS SIGUIENTES FRASES? *Recuerde: no hay respuestas correctas/erróneas.*

	Sí	No	No sé
1) La mayoría de los indicadores de la victimización infantil son directamente observables.			
2) Sólo si observo más de un síntoma a la vez puedo sospechar que un menor está siendo victimizado/a.			
3) Es una obligación legal velar por el bienestar del menor, incluso si eso significa implicarse en situaciones fuera del contexto escolar.			
4) Si el menor pertenece a otra cultura, más tolerante hacia ciertas prácticas consideradas maltrato por nuestra sociedad, no se debe intervenir.			
5) La frecuencia de la conducta del agresor es un factor decisivo para sospechar si estamos ante un caso de victimización.			
6) Un/a niño/a con familia monoparental tiene mayores posibilidades de ser victimizado/a.			
7) Un/a menor con baja autoestima tiene mayores posibilidades de ser victimizado/a.			
8) Una familia aislada o con pocos vínculos se considera más propensa a la victimización.			
9) Una familia que demuestra excesiva protección por el menor se asocia a mayor prevención frente a la victimización.			
10) Es fácil definir cuándo un comportamiento es aceptable y cuándo es maltrato.			

D.I NOTIFICACIÓN

En este apartado nos proponemos saber qué inquietudes, certezas y experiencias tiene respecto de notificar casos de victimización infantil a un organismo oficial. Encontrará dos preguntas y el mismo sistema de diez frases.

1) ¿Alguna vez ha realizado alguna notificación oficial de victimización infantil a un organismo externo a la escuela (como los Servicios Sociales, por ejemplo)?

Sí No Nunca he tenido una sospecha

Si ha respondido que **nunca ha tenido una sospecha**, por favor pase a la pregunta 2 de este mismo apartado en la siguiente página.

Si ha respondido que **no**, por favor, responda brevemente ¿por qué no lo ha notificado?

Sólo si ha respondido que **sí**, por favor responda las cuatro preguntas (a, b, c y d) de la misma sección en la siguiente página

a. ¿Cuántos casos ha notificado, aproximadamente?

- Entre 1 y 10 Entre 11 y 20 Más de 20 No estoy seguro/a

b. En la mayoría de los casos, ¿a qué organismo oficial (de fuera de la escuela) ha notificado primero?

- Policía Servicios Sociales Hospital Juzgado Otros. ¿Cuál/es?..... No lo recuerdo

c. Generalmente ¿participó la dirección en la notificación?

- Sí No No lo recuerdo

d. ¿Conoce cómo continuaron el/los casos notificados?

- Sí, todos Sí, alguno/s No, ninguno No lo sé

Si respondió que **no** o **no lo sé**, pase a la pregunta 2) de la misma sección, por favor.

Sólo si respondió que **sí**, ¿considera globalmente que la/s intervención/es fue/ron beneficiosa/s para el menor?

- La mayoría, sí La mayoría, no En igual medida, algunas sí y otras no No lo sé

2) ¿Hay un protocolo de notificación de malos tratos graves y leves en el centro?

- Sí No No lo sé

Si respondió que **no** o que **no lo sabe**, pase a la sección D.II de las frases, por favor.

Sólo si respondió que **sí**, por favor diga en qué grado considera que conoce su contenido:

- Mucho Lo suficiente Poco (menos de lo suficiente) Nada

D.II ¿ESTÁ DE ACUERDO CON LAS SIGUIENTES FRASES? Recuerde: *no hay respuestas correctas/erróneas.*

	Sí	No	No sé
1) En caso de malos tratos graves, el primer organismo fuera del centro al que debe informarse es la Policía.			
2) En caso de malos tratos leves, el primer organismo fuera del centro al que debe informarse son los Servicios Sociales.			
3) Sólo se debe notificar un caso si desde el centro estamos seguros de que el menor está siendo victimizado/a.			
4) En muchos casos, la intervención de los Servicios Sociales no favorece el bienestar del menor.			
5) La notificación se realiza de forma anónima, si así se desea.			
6) Una notificación pone en conocimiento del caso a un juez.			
7) Si una sospecha resulta no ser cierta, la familia tiene derecho a demandar judicialmente al informante.			
8) Excesivas notificaciones crean ineficiencia en las instituciones que las reciben (Servicios Sociales, Policía, etc.).			
9) La notificación es una acción voluntaria: quien tiene sospechas decide si la hace o no.			
10) Para notificar oficialmente es obligatorio contar con el acuerdo del director/a del centro.			

ESTA PARTE ES PARA USTED: ¡MUCHAS GRACIAS POR PARTICIPAR!

Valoramos mucho que se haya decidido a participar y le reiteramos que su colaboración ha sido muy importante.

Grup de Recerca en Victimització Infantil i Adolescent (GReVIA)
Departamento de Personalidad, Evaluación y Tratamientos Psicológicos
Facultad de Psicología - Universidad de Barcelona
<http://www.ub.edu/grevia/>

2. Plantilla de corrección

B.II ¿ESTÁ DE ACUERDO CON LAS SIGUIENTES FRASES? Recuerde: no hay respuestas correctas/erróneas.

	Sí	No	No sé
1) Los menores son igualmente vulnerables frente a la violencia que los adultos.	0	1	0
2) Sea una conducta intencional o no, si es perjudicial para el menor debe considerarse victimización.	0	1	0
3) La victimización infantil puede afectar el correcto desarrollo neurofisiológico del niño/a.	1	0	0
4) Podemos calificar una situación de victimización sólo si pone en peligro inmediato la salud física del menor.	0	1	0
5) En su mayoría, los padres que victimizan a menores son personas que presentan una enfermedad psicológica o mental.	0	1	0
6) La victimización infantil consiste siempre en una acción violenta que comete una persona contra un menor.	0	1	0
7) El tipo de victimización infantil más frecuente es el maltrato físico.	0	1	0
8) Un menor que ha sufrido victimizaciones tiene más posibilidades de sufrir un trastorno depresivo en la adultez.	1	0	0
9) La victimización infantil es una problemática que afecta aproximadamente a menos de un 10% de los niños en España.	0	1	0
10) Un menor que ha sufrido victimización suele desarrollar un sentimiento de rechazo hacia el perpetrador/a.	0	1	0

C.II ¿ESTÁ DE ACUERDO CON LAS SIGUIENTES FRASES? *Recuerde: no hay respuestas correctas/erróneas.*

	Sí	No	No sé
1) La mayoría de los indicadores de la victimización infantil son directamente observables.	0	1	0
2) Sólo si observo más de un síntoma a la vez puedo sospechar que un menor está siendo victimizado/a.	1	0	0
3) Es una obligación legal velar por el bienestar del menor, incluso si eso significa implicarse en situaciones fuera del contexto escolar.	1	0	0
4) Si el menor pertenece a otra cultura, más tolerante hacia ciertas prácticas consideradas maltrato por nuestra sociedad, no se debe intervenir.	0	1	0
5) La frecuencia de la conducta del agresor es un factor decisivo para sospechar si estamos ante un caso de victimización.	1	0	0
6) Un/a niño/a con familia monoparental tiene mayores posibilidades de ser victimizado/a.	1	0	0
7) Un/a menor con baja autoestima tiene mayores posibilidades de ser victimizado/a.	1	0	0
8) Una familia aislada o con pocos vínculos se considera más propensa a la victimización.	1	0	0
9) Una familia que demuestra excesiva protección por el menor se asocia a mayor prevención frente a la victimización.	0	1	0
10) Es fácil definir cuándo un comportamiento es aceptable y cuándo es maltrato.	0	1	0

D.II ¿ESTÁ DE ACUERDO CON LAS SIGUIENTES FRASES? *Recuerde: no hay respuestas correctas/erróneas.*

	Sí	No	No sé
1) En caso de malos tratos graves, el primer organismo fuera del centro al que debe informarse es la Policía.	0	1	0
2) En caso de malos tratos leves, el primer organismo fuera del centro al que debe informarse son los Servicios Sociales.	1	0	0
3) Sólo se debe notificar un caso si desde el centro estamos seguros de que el menor está siendo victimizado/a.	0	1	0
4) En muchos casos, la intervención de los Servicios Sociales no favorece el bienestar del menor.	0	1	0
5) La notificación se realiza de forma anónima, si así se desea.	0	1	0
6) Una notificación pone en conocimiento del caso a un juez.	0	1	0
7) Si una sospecha resulta no ser cierta, la familia tiene derecho a demandar judicialmente al informante.	0	1	0
8) Excesivas notificaciones crean ineficiencia en las instituciones que las reciben (Servicios Sociales, Policía, etc.).	0	1	0
9) La notificación es una acción voluntaria: quien tiene sospechas decide si la hace o no.	0	1	0
10) Para notificar oficialmente es obligatorio contar con el acuerdo del director/a del centro.	0	1	0

Appendix 2: Questionnaire pretest

Three strategies were used to pre-test the questionnaire (Figure 1). All participants were volunteers and gave their verbal consent to be audio-recorded.

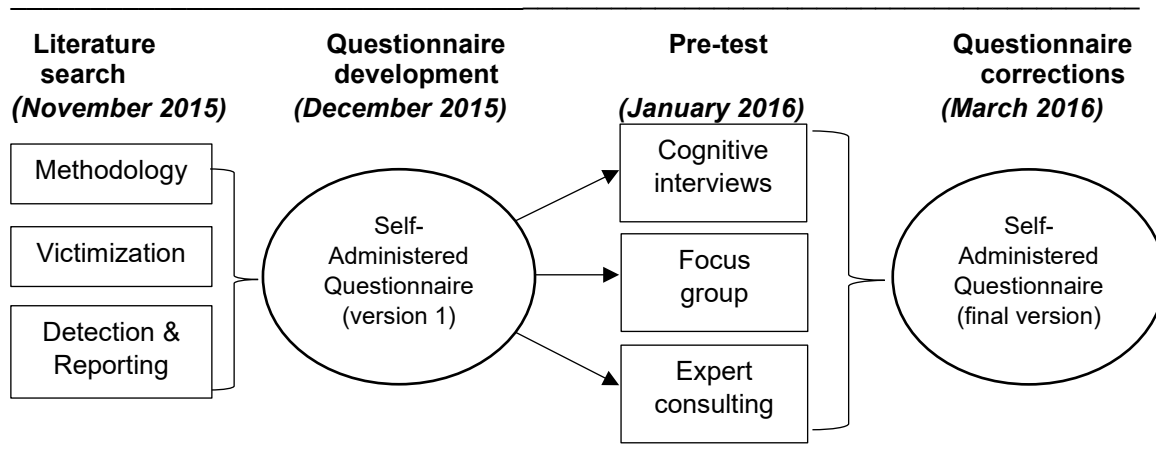


Figure 11. Questionnaire design procedure.

Five volunteers participated in the cognitive interviews (Willis, 1999), (three of them were psychologists who were working or had worked with minors, one was a kindergarten teacher, and one was an assistant teacher (100% women, $M = 25.4$ years old, $SD = 1.16$). They were individually asked to read each item and statement in the questionnaire and express out loud what they had understood or thought. No additional volunteers were recruited once saturation of the information was detected.

During the focus group (Krueger & Casey, 2008), a group of eight participants (five primary school teachers, two kindergarten teachers, and one teacher who was working at both levels; 75% women, $M = 27.5$ years old, $SD = 5.8$), assessed the questionnaire's length, wording, instructions and item sequence collectively and suggested possible improvements. A consensus was reached on each topic discussed. The session was guided by the first author as a moderator using a topic guide, and an assistant moderator. The task of the assistant was to guarantee that the moderator gave time and space for every member to express their opinion and that the environment was

sufficiently respectful and supportive for all the participants to feel comfortable in sharing their impressions.

Finally, the experts assessed the quality of the questionnaire and tried to identify problems of measurement or specificity (de Leeuw, 2008). Two experts, one a specialist in childhood victimization and the other with considerable experience in developing questionnaires, were invited to identify problems that might arise with its administration.

The responses obtained and the feedback from pre-test participants suggested that the instrument was potentially effective. The instructions were clear and the questionnaire evidenced a direct and strong link with the research aims. However, vocabulary, response options, and question pathways were adjusted in accordance with the participants' suggestions.

References:

- de Leeuw, E., Hox, J & Dillman, D. *International Handbook of Survey Methodology*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Krueger, R.A. & Casey, M.A. (2008) *Focus Groups. A practical guide for applied research*. 4th edition. CA, USA: Sage.
- Willis, G. (1999) Cognitive Interviewing. A "How To" Guide. *Research Triangle Institute*. Retrieved from: <http://www.hkr.se/pagefiles/35002/gordonwillis.pdf>

Appendix 3: Missing data handling

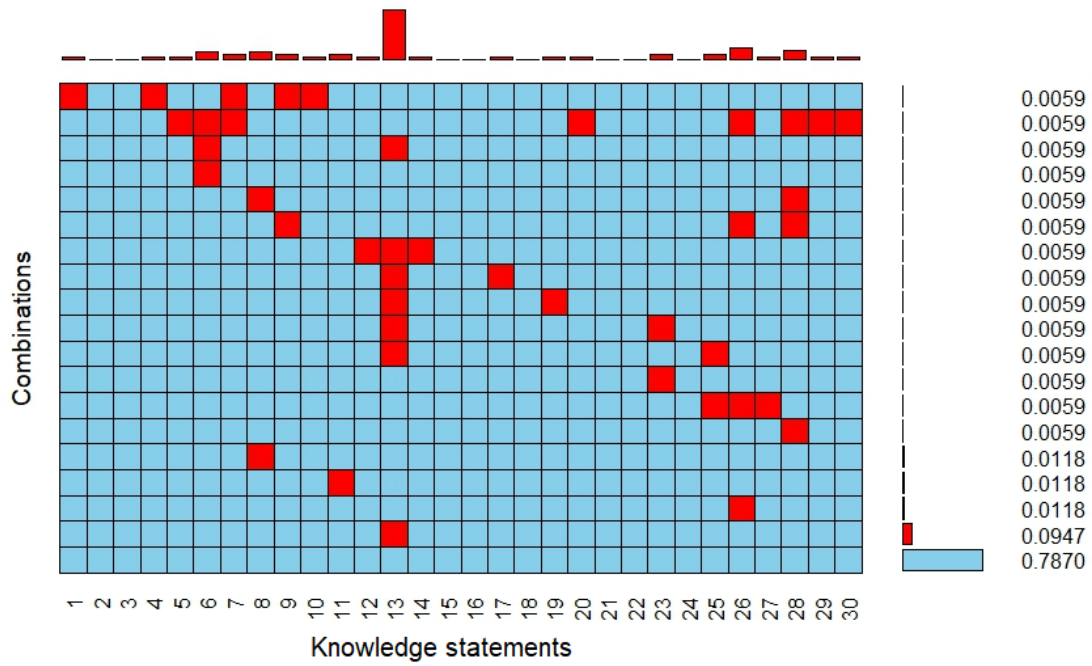


Figure 12. Distribution of missing cases for knowledge statements.

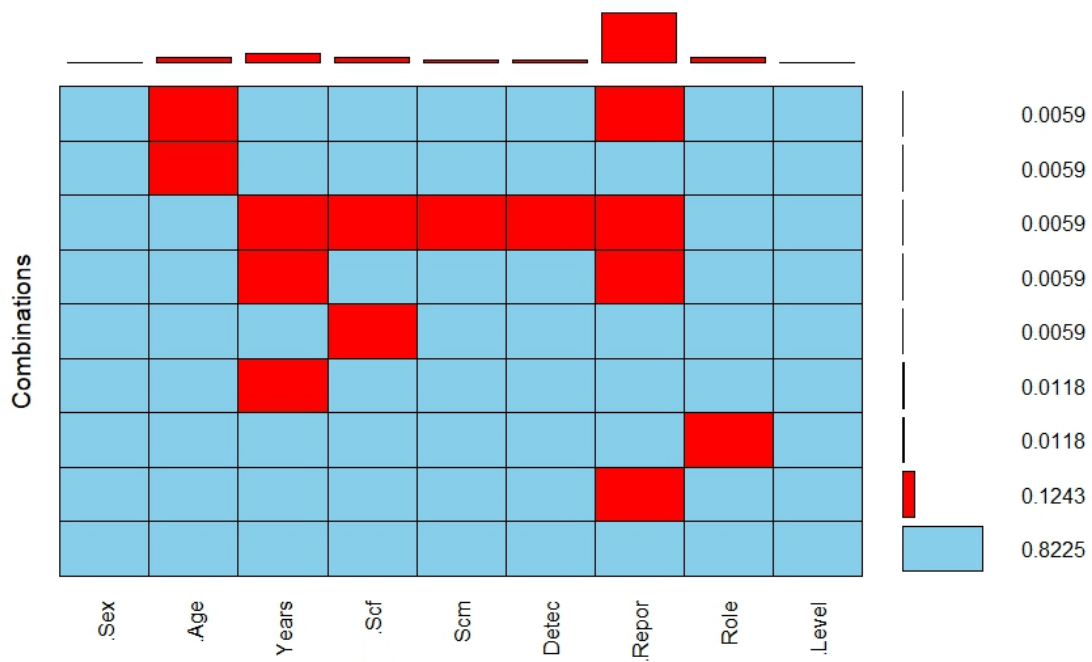


Figure 13. Distribution of missing cases for other variables.

Note. Scf = “Self-confidence to identify signs in families”, Scm = “Self-confidence to identify signs in minors”.

Appendix 4: Statistic for each analyzed variable of the imputed dataset (study #2)**Table 22.** Results for analyzed variables in each imputed dataset.

Variable	Imputed dataset	$\chi^2(d)$	<i>p</i> value
Gender	1	2.3067	.3156
	2	3.5585	.1688
	3	2.2836	.3192
	4	3.1943	.2025
	5	1.7572	.4154
	6	2.0981	.3503
	7	3.9521	.1386
	8	2.3067	.3156
	9	2.8576	.2396
	10	2.0586	.3573
	d	2.63734	.28229
	r	-.015847583	
	D2	0.882635019	
V2	24963.54916		
Level	1	4.0174	0.4037
	2	4.0174	0.4037
	3	4.1826	0.3819
	4	2.8412	0.5847
	5	3.0043	0.5571
	6	2.707	0.608
	7	4.1943	0.3804
	8	2.8909	0.5762
	9	3.7607	0.4394
	10	2.6774	0.6132
	d	3.42932	0.49483
	r	-0.133874516	
	D2	1.172856559	
V2	270.9392604		
Role	1	26.328	0.00002717
	2	24.403	0.00006631
	3	26.897	0.00002085
	4	25.306	0.00004366
	5	28.132	0.00001173
	6	24.161	0.00007417
	7	20.727	0.0003587
	8	24.003	0.00007976
	9	28.607	0.000009392
	10	25.352	0.00004275
	d	25.3916	7.34492E-05
	r	-7.703644631	
	D2	10.1757877	
V2	4.901574628		
Reference point	1	6.7823	0.03367
	2	5.5501	0.06235
	3	8.6095	0.0135

	4	8.213	0.01646
	5	8.0681	0.0177
	6	7.1378	0.02819
	7	6.2002	0.04505
	8	6.8595	0.03239
	9	8.7501	0.01259
	10	5.4731	0.06479
	d	7.16437	0.032669
	r	-0.978405297	
	D2	2.605546733	
	V2	0.003153283	
Protocol	1	0.92091	0.631
	2	0.62393	0.732
	3	2.8854	0.2363
	4	2.9388	0.2301
	5	1.3888	0.4994
	6	3.1143	0.2107
	7	2.3342	0.3113
	8	2.5236	0.2831
	9	2.8647	0.2387
	10	2.5022	0.2862
	d	2.209684	0.36588
	r	0.030200312	
	D2	0.729850153	
	V2	7532.28275	
Training	1	4.4059	0.1105
	2	3.8023	0.1494
	3	4.5877	0.1009
	4	3.4809	0.1754
	5	4.2103	0.1218
	6	3.9898	0.136
	7	4.6038	0.1001
	8	4.5514	0.1027
	9	3.1938	0.2025
	10	4.0964	0.129
	d	4.09223	0.13283
	r	-0.252160616	
	D2	1.420112359	
	V2	56.93355277	
Recognize signs in minors	1	0.75772	0.6846
	2	2.0797	0.3535
	3	2.6835	0.2614
	4	2.1407	0.3429
	5	1.3079	0.52
	6	0.48467	0.7848
	7	0.70714	0.7022
	8	1.1878	0.5522
	9	1.3707	0.5039
	10	0.46271	0.7935
	d	1.318254	0.5499

	r	0.100463351	
	D2	0.417092811	
	V2	776.6797431	
Recognize signs in families	1	5.3584	0.06862
	2	6.1709	0.04571
	3	5.7901	0.0553
	4	7.4912	0.02362
	5	4.2678	0.1184
	6	2.9131	0.233
	7	3.9491	0.1388
	8	2.918	0.2325
	9	2.6522	0.2655
	10	2.7703	0.2503
	d	4.42811	0.143175
	r	-0.332815087	
	D2	1.549995575	
	V2	26.01312661	

Note. Formulas for extracted from (van Buuren, 2012), equations 5.6 a 5.9, available at <https://stefvanbuuren.name/fimd/sec-multiparameter.html>