

## School Violence in Medical and Nursing Students of a Public University in Mexico

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**Abstract:** A cross-sectional and descriptive study was carried out in undergraduate university students of the first semester in a public university in Mexico. The objective was to determine the presence of school violence, the associated factors and the differences regarding the career (medical and nursing students). A socio-demographic data questionnaire and the school violence questionnaire of the Ombudsman (2000) were applied. In the results it was found that 44.8% of the students have experienced some type of abuse; of them the main form of violence in medical students was verbal abuse, followed by social exclusion and cyberbullying, while in the case of nursing it was social exclusion, followed by verbal abuse and cyberbullying. The students of both careers have: higher risk of being mistreated by peers of the same semester and male gender, the victims think of dropping out their studies and showing low academic performance. In conclusion, the presence of violence affects approximately half of the students through different forms of abuse, altering their health, well-being and academic performance. It is necessary to take urgent measures to help combat this problem.

**Key words:** abuse, violence, university students

### 1. Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2003) defines violence as the “intentional use of force or physical power, in fact or as a threat, against oneself, another person or a group or community, causing or have a high probability of causing injury, death, psychological damage, developmental disorders or deprivation”. According to the Dictionary of the Spanish Language, the mistreatment consists of treating someone badly in word or deed, however the terms violence and abuse are used interchangeably in different contexts. The prevalence of violence in university students ranges from 10.6% to 85.8% according to the results of different authors (Hoyos, 2011; Ríos, 2013; Millán, 2015; Oliveros, 2016).

The types of violence include physical and verbal aggression, intimidation, social exclusion, sexual harassment, property damage and cyberbullying, the strategies used by the aggressors to harm students are multiple, ranging from insults, intimidation, cruel appeals, heavy jokes, unfair accusations, rejection, rumors, thefts, threats, ridicule, humiliation, hitting (Hernández & Solano, 2007), manipulating, blackmail, sexual harassment, social exclusion, as well as the use of technologies of information and communication (email, social

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networks, blogs, personal pages, chat, video chat, cell phones, calls and text messages), which circulate messages, recordings, photos and videos of young people in uncomfortable or shameful situations, among others (Zebadúa, 2010).

The causes of school mistreatment are very varied, complex and related to various spheres, including family, culture, social and school context (Namie, 2004), the factors identified as triggers of abuse at the top level are: the difference of academic abilities exhibited by the members of a group, where some young people with additional needs end up being mocked and attacked by the rest of their classmates (McDougall, 1999), differences in race or religion (González de Rivera, 2007), physical strength, desire for popularity, level of self-esteem, among others (Cerezo & Ato, 2010; Velázquez Reyes & Pérez González, 2007).

Some of the effects generated at the psychological level in victims of abuse are the loss of self-confidence, low self-esteem, loneliness, fear, distrust, anxiety and depression. According to results obtained in some investigations (Maida, 2006; Larsson, 2003), school violence is the main cause of stress among students, in addition to causing them low academic performance, absenteeism, school dropout and failure (Pinilla, 2012).

## **2. Literature Review**

Dan Olweus (1973) was one of the pioneers in the study of school mistreatment, after observing that some of his students were mistreated, threatened and intimidated by their own classmates (Paredes, 2008). In the 80s and early 90s, there was a special interest in the subject, different countries such as France, Germany, England, Spain and the United States (Debarbieux, 1996), which later extends to Latin America and countries of the Caribbean (Fante, 2005; Saldarriaga, 2010; Varela, 2011), in the results of these works there is a marked increase in violence in school spaces, as well as the high human, economic and social cost for the actors involved in the problem (Cabezas & Monge, 2007, Romera, Del Rey & Ortega, 2011).

The few studies regarding school mistreatment in the university context, the high prevalence reported by some authors, the serious psychological damage caused to victims in the short and long term, motivated the realization of the present study, whose objective is to determine the presence violence in university students, the associated factors and the differences according to the career, the information obtained will serve to know the different aspects related to the problem and take measures that could help to combat it.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Design of the Research and Study Population**

A cross-sectional and descriptive study was carried out in students who were enrolled in the first semester of Nursing and Medicine careers, at a public university in Mexico.

### **3.2 Procedure**

The information was obtained in the classrooms, first the students were explained what the project consisted of, the purpose of the project was made known, their participation was explained to them and participation was voluntary, they were answered the doubts that arose in the students regarding the study. The students who decided to participate expressed this through the signing an informed consent, in which it was ensured that the information provided by them would be handled confidentially and anonymously, then proceeded to the application of two questionnaires, first one on socio demographic data and a validated instrument, prepared in 2000 by the

Autonomous University of Madrid, for the National Report of the Ombudsman, which deals with School Violence.

### 3.3 Instrument

The questionnaire on school violence consists of 19 items, which are answered by participants in three sections, in the first of them the participant is interrogated with the intention of knowing if he has observed, violent behavior towards one of his classmates (witness), in the second one he is examined about the possible aggressions that could have suffered in his person (victim), in the third section he is questioned about his participation in the attacks against his companions (aggressor) (Del Barrio, Martín, Montero et al., 2003).

The instrument, in addition to providing information on the forms of abuse, identifies the places where the aggressions are carried out, general aspects about the aggressors, support perceived by the victims, behavior of the actors involved in the mistreatment, sexual harassment, among others.

The questionnaire was adapted to the Colombian school context (Hoyos, 2009) using the technique of focal groups, the data obtained allowed to adjust regarding the use of language, among other aspects that had to be modified; finally the reliability of the scale was determined, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.801, which shows a high level of reliability in the set of items that integrate it.

The school mistreatment in general was determined with the presence of at least one form of violence exerted against the university students, according to the strategies used by the aggressors to harm the students, the abuse was classified into seven types: verbal abuse, social exclusion, cyberbullying, abuse of property, sexual harassment, physical abuse and intimidation.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of the data included descriptive statistics, absolute and relative frequencies were calculated for the categorical variables, measures of central tendency and dispersion measures for the numerical variables, the associations between variables were made with contingency tables, Chi-square was calculated, odds ratio and 95% confidence intervals (CI) in the statistical program SPSS for Social Sciences version 20.

In accordance with the Regulation of the General Health Law in Mexico, in the field of research for health, article 17; this research is classified as category 1 without any risk to the participants, the management of the information provided was confidential and anonymous, and the participation of the students was voluntary, after signing an informed consent.

## 4. Results

The study population was made up of 566 students who were in the first semester of a bachelor's degree, in a University Center of Health Sciences, of these 346 belonged to the Medicine degree and 220 to the Nursing degree, the average age in the Nursing students was slightly higher, in the same way the proportion of female students, who lives with their parents and has a job was higher in the nursing career (Table 1).

Verbal abuse was the most frequent type of abuse followed by social exclusion and cyberbullying; on the contrary, intimidation and physical abuse were the less frequent types of mistreatment. The most frequent aggressions used by the aggressors were: ignoring the student, speaking ill of him or insulting him (Table 2).

**Table 1 Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Study Population**

|                        |             | Medical students |            | Nursing students |            |
|------------------------|-------------|------------------|------------|------------------|------------|
| Average age (years)    |             | 18.88±1.95       |            | 19.74±3.87       |            |
|                        |             | <b>n</b>         | <b>(%)</b> | <b>n</b>         | <b>(%)</b> |
| Gender                 | Female      | 210              | 60.7       | 167              | 75.9       |
|                        | Male        | 136              | 39.3       | 53               | 24.1       |
| Marital status         | Single      | 342              | 98.8       | 212              | 96.4       |
|                        | With couple | 4                | 1.2        | 8                | 3.6        |
| Lives with his parents | Yes         | 271              | 78.3       | 183              | 83.2       |
|                        | No          | 75               | 21.7       | 37               | 16.8       |
| Have a job             | Yes         | 32               | 9.2        | 56               | 24.7       |
|                        | No          | 314              | 90.8       | 164              | 75.3       |
| Career                 |             | 346              | 66.6       | 220              | 33.3       |

**Table 2 Types of Abuse According to the Strategies Used by the Aggressors to Harm University Students**

| Type of abuse            | Strategies used by aggressors   | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> |
|--------------------------|---|----------|----------|
| Verbal abuse (37.8%)     | They speak ill of you   | 98       | 17.3%    |
|                          | They insult you   | 66       | 11.7%    |
|                          | They give you nicknames that offend or ridicule you   | 50       | 8.8%     |
| Social exclusion (29.6%) | They ignore you   | 123      | 21.7%    |
|                          | They do not let you participate   | 47       | 7.9%     |
| Cyber bullying (29%)     | They record you or take pictures of you without you wanting to                                      | 53       | 9.4%     |
|                          | You have been excluded from a social network or group of friends                                    | 41       | 7.3%     |
|                          | They harass you in Messenger or a similar program   | 17       | 3.0%     |
|                          | They circulate recordings of you without you wanting to   | 15       | 2.7%     |
|                          | They harass you in the chats or when communicating on the internet                                  | 15       | 2.7%     |
|                          | You receive offensive messages on your cell phone   | 14       | 2.5%     |
|                          | Receive offensive calls by cell phone   | 3        | 0.5%     |
|                          | You receive offensive messages by email   | 3        | 0.5%     |
|                          | Create offensive websites or upload information about yourself that you would not want to see there | 2        | 0.4%     |
| Abuse on property (5.5%) | They hide things from you   | 19       | 3.4%     |
|                          | They steal your things  | 9        | 1.6%     |
|                          | Break your stuff  | 3        | 0.5%     |
| Sexual harassment (4.4%) | They sexually harass you  | 25       | 4.4%     |
| Physical abuse (3.9%)    | They hit you  | 13       | 2.3%     |
|                          | They threaten you just to make you afraid   | 9        | 1.6%     |
| Intimidation (1.4%)      | They force you to do things you do not want through threats (bring money, do jobs, etc.)            | 5        | 0.9%     |
|                          | They threaten you with weapons (sticks, knives, etc.)   | 3        | 0.5%     |

According to the career, it was found that the prevalence of abuse in general was higher in students of the Nursing career (54.1%), compared to those in Medicine (38.7%), as well as the students of the career of Nursing, showed higher figures in the different types of abuse compared to Medicine, except in physical abuse where Medicine students scored higher. The most common forms of mistreatment against nursing students was social exclusion, while in the case of medicine it was verbal abuse, third place in both careers was occupied by cyberbullying (Table 3).

**Table 3 Distribution of the Type of Abuse According to the Career of University Students**

|                   | Medical students |              | Nursing students |              |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|
|                   | Yes              | No           | Yes              | No           |
|                   | <b>n (%)</b>     | <b>n (%)</b> | <b>n (%)</b>     | <b>n (%)</b> |
| Abuse in general  | 134 (38.7)       | 212 (61.3)   | 119 (54.1)       | 101 (45.9)   |
| Verbal abuse      | 69 (19.1)        | 277 (80.1)   | 69 (31.4)        | 151 (68.6)   |
| Social exclusion  | 55 (15.9)        | 291 (84.1)   | 75 (34.1)        | 145 (66.0)   |
| Physical abuse    | 13 (3.8)         | 333 (96.2)   | 7 (3.2)          | 213 (96.8)   |
| Intimidation      | 1 (0.3)          | 345 (99.7)   | 5 (2.3)          | 215 (97.7)   |
| Sexual harassment | 8 (2.3)          | 338 (97.7)   | 17 (7.7)         | 203 (92.3)   |
| Cyber bullying    | 62 (17.9)        | 284 (82.1)   | 41 (18.6)        | 179 (81.4)   |
| Property damage   | 12 (3.5)         | 334 (96.5)   | 14 (6.4)         | 206 (93.6)   |

The role played by the actors in the abuse process, it was found that 27.4% declare not having witnessed aggressions against their peers, two fifths of the participants witnessed the aggressions, 15.2% are victims of them, 7.4% behaves like an aggressor and one out of every ten students shows a mixed behavior (victim/aggressor) (Table 4).

**Table 4 Role of the Participants in the Phenomenon of Mistreatment towards University Students**

|   |   | <b>n</b> | <b>(%)</b> |
|---|---|----------|------------|
| Gender of the victim                        | Male  | 78       | 41.3       |
|   | Female  | 175      | 46.4       |
| Gender of the aggressor                     | Male  | 35       | 6.2        |
|   | Female  | 48       | 8.6        |
|   | Both  | 21       | 3.7        |
| Role of the actors in the mistreatment      | Witness   | 229      | 40.4       |
|   | Aggressor   | 42       | 7.4        |
|   | Victim  | 86       | 15.2       |
|   | Victim/aggressor                                  | 54       | 9.6        |
| Relationship between students and teachers  | They have many friends                            | 490      | 86.6       |
|   | They have few friends                             | 76       | 13.4       |
|   | Good treatment by the teacher                     | 507      | 89.6       |
|   | Students with problems with a teacher             | 58       | 10.3       |
| Forms of abuse                              | A group of students assault a young man.          | 100      | 17.8       |
|   | Violence between two groups of students.          | 123      | 21.8       |
|   | One or more students assault a teacher            | 83       | 14.8       |
|   | A teacher mistreats his students                  | 119      | 21.1       |
| People who intervene to stop the aggression | Speak up if it's a friend                         | 66       | 11.8       |
|   | They intervene, even if it is not a friend        | 44       | 7.8        |
|   | A teacher intervenes                              | 23       | 4.1        |
|   | They do not intervene                             | 143      | 25.3       |
|   | They join the aggressors to annoy the victim      | 19       | 3.4        |
| Students are afraid in college              | The qualification and the difficulty of the works | 147      | 26.3       |
|   | By a teacher                                      | 57       | 10.2       |
| Reasons to drop out of school               | Economic problems                                 | 22       | 3.9        |
|   | Family problems                                   | 11       | 1.9        |
|   | Aggressions                                       | 8        | 1.4        |
|   | Other motives                                     | 96       | 17         |

In the relationships between students and teachers, one in ten participants says they have few friends, a similar proportion claims to have had problems with a teacher. According to the results, violence can be generated between two groups of students, a group of young people can attack a student or a teacher or a teacher can mistreat their students (Table 4).

At the moment in which the aggressions occur one out of every five students intervenes to stop the attacks, while a similar proportion does not do anything when this happens, those that intervene do so because they are attacking one of their friends (11.8%), of those that do not intervene a part of them believes that they should do it, while another part considers that the aggressions towards the others is not their problem, finally a small proportion (3.4%) join the aggressor to annoy the victim (Table 4).

Some students (36.5%) say they have been afraid to go to university, the main cause of fear is the grade notes, the inability to perform the activities that are entrusted to them as part of their academic training or because they fear a teacher. A quarter of the students (24.2%) have thought to abandon their studies, this due to economic, family, aggression, among other causes, half of the victims (49%), consider that the aggressions to which they are subjected may affect his academic performance (Table 4).

In the bivariate analysis, it is observed that nursing students have a greater number of factors associated with abuse and they differ from those detected in medical students. In all forms of abuse studied except in cyberbullying, there is a greater risk that the aggressor is in the same semester as the victim, all types of abuse except in the social exclusion variable there is a greater risk that the aggressor is male (Table 5).

**Table 5 Factors associated with Mistreatment of Students of Medicine and Nursing**

|  | Nursing students |                     | Medical students |                     |
|--|------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|
|  | p                | OR (IC < 95%)       | p                | OR (IC < 95%)       |
| <b>Verbal abuse</b>  |                  |                     |                  |                     |
| The aggressor is from the same semester                              | 0.000            | 4.21 (1.90-9.33)    |                  |                     |
| The man is the aggressor   | 0.006            | 5.74 (1.43-22.90)   |                  |                     |
| <b>Physical abuse</b>  |                  |                     |                  |                     |
| The aggressor is from the same semester                              | 0.000            | 9.94 (2.11-46.96)   |                  |                     |
| The man is the aggressor   |                  | 10.60 (1.77-63.19)  |                  |                     |
| No one intervenes to stop them                                       | 0.002            |                     |                  |                     |
| For the aggressions they have thought about abandoning their studies | 0.031            | 4.75 (1.01-22.28)   |                  |                     |
|  | 0.011            | 12.05 (1.08-133.44) | 0.006            | 12.54 (1.28-122.53) |
| <b>Social exclusion</b>  |                  |                     |                  |                     |
| Having few friends   | 0.000            | 3.69 (1.78-7.65)    |                  |                     |
| Assaults cause to abandon their studies                              | 0.000            | 3.42 (1.69-6.90)    |                  |                     |
| Academic performance   | 0.048            | 2.21 (0.99-4.91)    |                  |                     |
| The aggressor is from the same semester                              | 0.040            | 2.23 (1.02-4.84)    |                  |                     |
| Place of aggressions   |                  |                     | 0.001            | 3.81 (1.63-8.94)    |
| No one intervenes to stop them                                       |                  |                     | 0.000            | 3.12 (1.64-5.96)    |
| <b>Sexual harassment</b>   |                  |                     |                  |                     |
| Fear of going to college   | 0.012            | 3.51 (1.24-9.88)    |                  |                     |
| Assaults cause to abandon their studies                              | 0.047            | 2.82 (0.97-8.15)    |                  |                     |
| Academic performance   | 0.035            | 8.33 (0.88-78.31)   |                  |                     |

|  |       |                     |       |                     |
|--|-------|---------------------|-------|---------------------|
| The aggressor is from the same semester        | 0.040 | 3.08 (1.00-9.48)    | 0.009 | 5.73 (1.31-25.12)   |
| The man is the aggressor                       | 0.006 | 6.21 (1.44-26.67)   |       |                     |
| <b>Damage to property</b>                      |       |                     |       |                     |
| Having few friends                             | 0.005 | 4.40 (1.43-13.56)   |       |                     |
| The aggressor is from the same semester        | 0.010 | 4.17 (1.29-13.46)   |       |                     |
| The man is the aggressor                       | 0.000 | 13.80 (3.35-56.82)  |       |                     |
| No one intervenes to stop them                 | 0.020 | 3.67 (1.14-11.74)   |       |                     |
| Assaults are a reason to abandon their studies | 0.000 | 17.58 (2.27-135.83) | 0.018 | 10.03 (0.96-104.28) |
| <b>Intimidation</b>                            |       |                     |       |                     |
| Having few friends                             | 0.000 | 22.90 (2.48-211.41) |       |                     |
| Assaults are a reason to abandon their studies | 0.000 | 20.66 (2.24-190.31) |       |                     |
| The aggressor is from the same semester        | 0.002 | 10.88 (1.74-68.14)  |       |                     |
| The man is the aggressor                       | 0.000 | 46.28 (6.64-322.43) |       |                     |
| No one intervenes to stop them                 | 0.003 | 9.65 (1.54-60.16)   |       |                     |
| <b>Cyber bullying</b>                          |       |                     |       |                     |
| Having few friends                             | 0.013 | 2.66 (1.20-5.89)    |       |                     |
| The man is the aggressor                       | 0.007 | 5.02 (1.38-18.26)   |       |                     |
| No one intervenes to stop them                 | 0.048 | 2.28 (0.99-5.27)    |       |                     |

Students who have few friends are more at risk of intimidation, damage to their property, cyberbullying and social exclusion, as well as students who suffer physical abuse, intimidation, social exclusion, sexual harassment and damages against their property are more risky of abandoning their studies, on the other hand the victims of sexual harassment and social exclusion have more risk of exhibiting low academic performance. Physical abuse, intimidation, social exclusion, cyberbullying and property damage are more probable to occur when no one is present to intervene to stop the aggressors (Table 5).

## 5. Discussion

The prevalence of violence found in the study population was high (44.8%), similar to that observed in other studies (Silva, 2013; Abdulah, 2018; Guevara, 2011; Prieto 2015; Vergel, 2016). The students of the Medicine career showed lower figures of abuse (38.7%), in comparison with Nursing students (52.9%), these results agree with those obtained by Ríos (2013) in similar populations and in a study carried out by Abdulah (2018), when comparing violence between medical students vs. students from other careers. Nursing students scored higher on most forms of abuse studied, except for variable physical abuse in which medical students scored higher.

Albert Bandura states that human beings reproduce the aggressive models observed in the family, culture and the media (Domènech, Íñiguez A. & Íñiguez L., 2002). According to the report of the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), Mexico is one of the most violent countries in the world, through the media and at all the time of the day news related to homicides, fights and other criminal acts that incite the violence. According to data obtained by the INEGI (2011), men are attributed superiority conditions with respect to women and in some cases violence against them is allowed, these indications show that in Mexican society the macho culture continues to prevail and It explains in a certain way the reason why the presence of mistreatment is greater in nursing students, whose composition is predominantly female.

The demographic variables of the participants were not associated with the different forms of mistreatment studied, this result is in line with that reported by Hoyos (2009), in a study carried out in university students in Barranquilla (Colombia), where he concludes that peer abuse it generates equally in both sexes and in all ages.

At the level of basic education, physical aggression is more common, as the age and level of studies advance, the mistreatment becomes more complex (Adams & Lawrence, 2011). The most frequent form of violence in medical students was verbal abuse, as has been reported by other authors (Vázquez, 2010; Silva, 2013; Millán, 2015; Martínez, 2016; Alzani, 2012; Vergel, 2016; Hoyos, 2011). In nursing students, the most common form of violence was social exclusion, a result similar to that found by Ríos (2013), in a comparative study conducted in Medicine and Nursing students.

The introduction of new technologies (email, social networks, blogs, personal pages, chat, video chat, cell phones, calls and text messages), in addition to improving communication and facilitating access to information, show its dark side by being used to exclude young people from certain groups, spreading rumors, molesting young people or damaging their image (Zebadúa, 2010), cyberbullying occupied the third place as a form of mistreatment towards students with 18%, a figure higher than that reported by Millán (2015) and Vergel (2016) in university students, but lower than that observed by Calmaestra and Mora (2008) in students from 12 to 18 years of age.

In our study, physical aggression was one of the less frequent forms of violence, values were higher in medical students than in nursing, these results agree with those reported by Ríos (2013) and Abdulah (2018), in this last study the figures of violence were higher in students of other careers, in comparison with those of Medicine.

The proportion of students who declare having behaved as an aggressor was 18.5%, this result is higher reported by other authors (Hoyos, 2011; Silva, 2013; Millán, 2015; Martínez, 2016; Trujillo, 2016). Likewise, students who stated that they had suffered at least one form of mistreatment, since they entered to the university was 44.8%, this value is higher than that reported in previous studies (Hoyos, 2011; Silva, 2013; Millán, 2015; Trujillo, 2016).

Some victims of abuse can become aggressors (Smith, 2011), in a review of abuse against high school students it was found that more than 50% of them, were forced to use physical or psychological violence to defend themselves from the aggressions or to prevent them from repeat (Prieto, Carrillo & Jiménez, 2005, Vázquez, Villanueva, Rizo & Ramos, 2005; Velázquez, 2005), in our study 9.6% of the participants showed a mixed behavior (victim-aggressor).

The results of different investigations (Vázquez, 2010; Silva, 2013; Millán, 2015; Alzani, 2012), show that males attack and are more assaulted than women. In a study conducted on students from the United States, it was found that students are three times more likely to be bullied via the internet by their male colleagues, compared to women (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2007), in our study the result was similarly, in the different forms of mistreatment studied, the victims were more likely to be attacked by men, compared to women.

Witnesses play a crucial role in the development of school maltreatment, if the people who observe these situations intervene the process is hindered, on the contrary, if these join or encourage the aggressor, it is more likely that these events will repeat themselves (Cuevas & Marmolejo, 2016). In this work, the proportion of witnesses was 40.4%, a figure similar to that reported by Millán (2015) and Oliveros (2016). The students who intervene to stop the aggressions do so if one of their friends is being mistreated, the proportion of those who intervene, even if it is not a friend, is lower than the first ones, this agrees with that observed by Hoyos (2011) and



Millán (2015), in addition to explaining in a certain way the reason why students who have few friends, have more risk of becoming victims of abuse.

In different studies (Hoyos, 2011; Martínez, 2016; Ríos, 2013; Millán, 2015) it has been shown that aggressions occur mainly in the classroom and aggressors attend the same semester as the victims (Hoyos, 2011; Guevara, 2011; Martínez, 2016), probably daily coexistence, for six or more hours per day, provides greater opportunities for aggressors to annoy their peers, especially when the teacher is not present or the students are free for several hours, because they have a discontinuous schedule.

On the other hand, the students stated that teachers actively participate in the mistreatment of their students (21.1%), this agrees with data obtained in a study conducted by Ramos and Vázquez (2011), in the University Center of the Altos of the University of Guadalajara, in the state of Jalisco, in whose results the students denounced a school climate of violence, in which classmates and professors participated.

The damages caused to the victims of abuse are of great magnitude and range from the fear of attending school, low academic performance, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and suicide attempts (Elliot, 2008; Mendelson et al., 2010; Olweus, 1993; Sesar et al., 2012). At the basic level, more than half of the students are afraid of going to school because of their peers, according to data provided by the National Ombudsman's Report (2000), although older university students are also afraid of attending university (38%), however this fear is mainly due to the qualification, to the difficulty represented by the work that is entrusted to them as part of their professional training or fear of a teacher and to a lesser extent to the aggressions that they suffer on the part of their companions.

Victims of sexual harassment and social exclusion are more likely to show poor academic performance, this result is consistent with what has been pointed out by other authors (Bermeo, 2008, Strom, Thoresen, Wentzel-Larse, Dyb, 2013). According to the National Dismissal Survey, conducted by the Ministry of Education (2012) in Colombia, 13% of children who dropped out of school had been victims of abuse, either by their peers or their teachers (Cruz-Rodríguez, 2014). In this study it was found that students who are victims of abuse are more likely to have thought about dropping out, this result is similar to the one reported by Guevara (2011), where 63.2% of students who had been mistreated had thought about abandoning their studies, due to the aggressions they suffered.

The students talk about the abuse mainly with their parents, followed by their friends and teachers, different to other studies where the young people tell them about the abuse first to their friends (Oliveros, 2016; Martínez, 2016).

## 6. Study Limitations

One of the main limitations of the study is that only students who attended the first semester of the degree were included in the study, in the following semesters the students go to the clinical field, in these places the students may be exposed to abuse by a greater number of people, among them hierarchical superiors, students of more advanced semesters, so that the numbers of mistreatment could differ. On the other hand, future work could include a greater number of socio-demographic variables, to know the effect that these could have on the presence of violence in students.

## 7. Conclusions

The presence of mistreatment in university students is high but similar that reported by other authors, the different forms of mistreatment were presented in greater proportion in students of the Nursing career compared to those of Medicine. The main forms of abuse were verbal aggression, social exclusion and cyberbullying, the place where aggressions occur is mainly the classroom, and students are more probable to be mistreated by male classmates who attend the same semester as they. Students who have few friends are more likely to be victims of abuse, they are more likely to think about dropping out of college and showing poor academic performance.

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