Victimization and Polyvictimization of Spanish Youth Involved in Juvenile Justice

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Abstract

Multiple victimization, or polyvictimization, is closely related to delinquency and crime, although few studies have studied these experiences in juvenile offenders. Therefore, the aim of this study is to present victimization rates in young offenders from a Southwestern European country. The sample consisted of 101 youth aged between 14 and 17 years, who were mainly recruited from detention centers (77.2%). From a lifetime perspective, the majority had suffered a criminal offense against the person (93.1%), exposure to community violence (95.0%), and peer victimization (86.1%). Prevalence rates for direct and indirect family violence were also high (63.4% and 43.6%). Electronic victimization reached a rate of 40.6% and sexual victimization of 15.8%. Past year experiences showed lower but similar patterns. Based on a community

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population criterion to define polyvictimization, 65.3% of the sample were considered lifetime polyvictims, while 41.6% were defined as past year polyvictims. Interventions to address multiple, concurrent forms of exposure to violence should be implemented in the justice system as polyvictimization has been revealed as a frequent reality in young offenders, which may result in antisocial behavior.

Keywords
polyvictimization, Spain, victimization, juvenile delinquency, child abuse

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Victimization is a reality for adolescents involved in the juvenile justice sys- tem (Croysdale, Drerup, Bewsey, & Hoffmann, 2008), and the rates of vic- timization for juveniles involved in the justice system are higher than in the general population (Stouthamer-Loeber, Loeber, Homish, & Wei, 2001). Although not every delinquent youth has been a crime victim (Cuevas, Finkelhor, Turner, & Ormrod, 2007), studies have shown that approximately three quarters of youth in the juvenile justice system have been exposed to victimization (Ford, Chapman, Mack, & Pearson, 2006). Thus, juvenile offenders are frequent victims of violence, both before (Croysdale et al., 2008; Ford, Elhai, Connor, & Frueh, 2010; Ford, Hartman, Hawke, & Chapman, 2008) and after involvement in the juvenile justice system (Beck, Cantor, Hartge, & Smith, 2013; Levitt, 2010). In this context, delinquency and victimization are often related and facilitate each other (Loeber, Kalb, & Huizinga, 2001).

To contextualize the present study, the next section is focused first on the victimization of young offenders, both

before their commission of crimes and while institutionalized in juvenile facilities, followed by a summary of stud- ies that have established their frequent experience of multiple victimization events or polyvictimization.

Victimization and Delinquency

Youth in juvenile detention facilities report high rates of exposure to trau- matic events that are often related to histories of interpersonal violence and victimization (Abram et al., 2004; Carrion & Steiner, 2000; DeLisi et al., 2010; Ford et al., 2008; Ruchkin, Schwab-Stone, Koposov, Vermeiren, & Steiner, 2002). The relationship between being a victim of violence and com- mitting a crime has been established in different studies (Ford et al., 2010; Gilbert et al., 2009; Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2001), specifically for being a victim of violent crimes (Shaffer & Ruback, 2002). In this sense, youth vic- timization seems to precede delinquency rather than vice versa (Cuevas et al., 2007) and is a predisposing risk factor for the development of delinquent behavior (Fagan, 2005; Widom, 1989; Widom &

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Maxfield, 2001). One of the most consistent findings within the etiology of offending, especially female offending (Dixon, Howie, & Starling, 2005; Goodkind, Ng, & Sarri, 2006; Matsumoto et al., 2009; Siegel & Williams, 2003), is offenders' high rates of childhood sexual victimization (McGrath, Nilsen, & Kerley, 2011). Other forms of child victimization by caregivers, such as neglect or physical mal- treatment, have shown a significant association with delinquency (Ryan, Williams, & Courtney, 2013; Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2001). In fact, there is a link between involvement in the child welfare system and recent

involvement in the juvenile justice system (Jonson-Reid & Barth, 2000a, 2000b; Ryan, Herz, Hernandez, & Marshall, 2007).

Few studies have focused on the victimization of young offenders inside facilities after they become involved in the juvenile justice system. The rela- tionship between offending and victimization has been confirmed (Chen, 2009) and is largely based on lifestyle-routine activity theories (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Meier & Miethe, 1993), which explains that delinquent youth, when compared with conventional adolescents, are more likely to be exposed and proximate to situations conducive to victimization. In this sense, institu- tionalization means a high risk of victimization for youth, who have to cope with the violent behavior of their peers (Green & Masson, 2002; Peterson- Badali & Koegl, 2002) and the professionals who work in the center (Davidson-Arad & Golan, 2007; Kiessl & Würger, 2002). For example, Beck et al. (2013) found that 9.5% of adjudicated youth in state juvenile and con-

tract facilities in the United States reported experiencing one or more inci- dents of sexual victimization by another youth or staff in the past year. Most of these reports were incidents involving facility staff. Other official reports have confirmed that juveniles are victimized at high rates by staff in both industrialized and developing countries as a form of control or punishment (Pinheiro, 2006).

Polyvictimization in Juvenile Offenders

The experience of multiple victimization events in childhood has been asso- ciated with severe emotional and behavioral problems and has important effects on adaptation and social integration (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007a). The cumulative negative effects of polyvictimization place an individual at high risk for antisocial and delinquent behavior (Ford et al., 2010; Mersky, Topitzes, & Reynolds, 2012). Furthermore, youth in secure juvenile justice settings are frequently polyvictimized during their lifetime, and the estimates of polyvictimization in these youth could be 3 times

higher than in community samples (Ford, Chapman, Connor, & Cruise, 2012). Other stud- ies have confirmed this tendency. For example, Croysdale et al. (2008) found that multiple forms of lifetime victimization related to child abuse and neglect were reported by 19% of males and 39% of females from their sample of 496 youth assessed at the moment of being admitted to two juvenile justice facili- ties. Although, Ford, Grasso, Hawke, and Chapman (2013) obtained a poly- victimized group of juvenile offenders who only accounted for 5% of the 1,959 adolescents in the sample and reported approximately 11 different forms of trauma and adversity over the life course. It should be noticed that youth offenders who have been defined as polyvictims are at higher risk for

psychopathological problems, such as posttraumatic stress symptoms, sui- cide risk, or alcohol and drug use problems, than other youth involved in the juvenile justice system (Croysdale et al., 2008; Ford et al., 2013).

The Present Study

An understanding of the links between victimization, polyvictimization, and offending will have important implications for crime prevention and criminal justice policy. However, most empirical studies published on the victimization of juvenile offenders have focused on incarcerated North American youth, with few exceptions (e.g., Davidson-Arad & Golan, 2007 in Israel; Kiessl & Würger, 2002 in South Africa; Matsumoto et al., 2009 in Japan; or Ruchkin et al., 2002 in Russia). In addition, most have focused only on life- time victimization (e.g., Abram et al., 2004; Croysdale et al., 2008; Ford et al., 2013); the study of more recent violent episodes has been routinely neglected. Given this gap in the

literature, we seek to present the rates of lifetime and past year victimization and polyvictimization in young offenders from a South Western European country. Furthermore, the use of a compre- hensive and structured method of assessment, with a solid theoretical basis in child and adolescent victimization (Finkelhor, Hamby, Ormrod, & Turner, 2005) that has been applied in different countries with community samples (such as Canada: Cyr et al., 2013; Finland: Ellonen & Salmi, 2011; United Kingdom: Radford, Corral, Bradley, & Fisher, 2013; Spain: Pereda, Guilera, & Abad, 2014), clinical samples (Álvarez-Lister, Pereda, Abad, Guilera, & GReVIA, 2014), and institutionalized samples (Cyr et al., 2012) allows com- parisons between young offenders and the general population and also with offenders from different cultural contexts.

Sociodemographic variables, such as age, gender, and the family socioeconomic status of the adolescents will also be described as previous literature (Cuevas et al., 2007; Herrera & Closkey, 2001; Murray & Farrington, 2010) has shown that these are relevant variables in both criminal offending and

victimization.

Method

Participants

Participants were a convenience sample of 101 youth (82 males and 19 females) who were recruited from three detention centers (77.2%) and five open regime teams or follow-up services for court orders to minors that do not require loss of freedom (22.8%) in northeastern Spain. To be included in the study, partici- pants had to be between 14 and 17 years old (M = 16.08, SD = 0.99) and have

enough cognitive and language skills to understand the questions. Most sample measures were representative of the population aged between 14 and 17 years in detention centers or with noncustodial sanctions in December 2012 (700 offenders; *M* age = 16.33; 86.6% male and 13.4% female). However, taking as a benchmark the data for 2012 provided by the Catalan Government's Directorate General for Community Sentences and Juvenile Justice, offenders with noncustodial sanctions were underrepresented.

At least 92.1% of the sample had committed a violent crime. On average, participants had been in contact with the juvenile system for 1.3 years (*SD* = 0.94). Moreover, almost one third (29.7%) of the sample were also involved in the youth protection system. The main sociodemographic characteristics are shown in Table 1. Males and females were comparable across age and family variables, but more females had been born in Spain (odds ratio [*OR*] = 0.11, 95% confidence interval [CI] = [0.03, 0.40]) and their parents had achieved higher educational levels (Cramer's $V = 0.379$, $p = .006$) or higher socioeconomic status (Cramer's $V = 0.416$, $p = .002$).

Procedure

Parents or legal guardians and youth were informed about the objectives of the research. First, an informed written consent was obtained from legal guardians. Assent was also obtained from youth on the day of the inter- view. Approximately, 27% of the initial sample could not participate because they retracted their initial verbal assent, lacked parent consent, or had other circumstances (i.e., were released, very agitated, or in isolation). Instruments were individually administered by researchers trained in data collection for violence against children (UNICEF, 2012). Most of the ado- lescents were interviewed in juvenile justice residential facilities, but those in open regimes who agreed to participate needed to go to their assigned judicial offices. Because of sensitive topics included in the survey, a psy- chological support service was offered to participants on completing the interview. The researchers gave written instructions to all participants should they seek psychological assistance or further information on their answers. None of them required this service. Also, interviewers

were trained to offer emotional support if needed, at the moment of the inter- view (UNICEF, 2012).

The study was approved by the institutional review board of the University of Barcelona (IRB00003099) and followed the basic ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki in Seoul (World Medical Association, 2008) and the Code of Ethics of the Catalan Psychological Association (Col legi Oficial de Psicòlegs de Catalunya, 1989).

Table 1. Sample Characteristics.

Variable	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Age						
14-15	19	23.2	8	42.1	27	26.7
16-17	63	76.8	11	57.9	74	73.3
Living with or in						
Two parents[a]	11	13.4	5	26.3	16	15.8
Single parent	4	4.9	1	5.3	5	5.0
Other[b]	1	1.2	1	5.3	2	2.0
A detention center	66	80.5	12	63.2	78	77.2
Country of origin[c]						
Spain	30	36.6	16	84.2	46	45.5
Other	52	63.4	3	15.8	55	54.5
Parent's education[d]						
No education or unfinished primary school	17	20.7	0	0.0	17	16.8
Primary or middle school	39	47.6	10	52.6	49	48.5
High school	9	11.0	1	5.6	10	9.9
Above high school	3	3.7	5	26.3	8	7.9
Do not know	14	17.1	3	15.8	7	16.8
SES						
Low	39	47.6	4	21.1	43	42.6
Medium low	18	22.0	2	10.5	20	19.8
Medium	9	11.0	6	31.6	15	14.9
Medium high	3	3.7	4	21.1	7	6.9
High						0.0
Do not						15.8

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Note. SES = socioeconomic status.

[a]Includes living with two biological parents and living with one biological parent and a stepparent.
[b]Other includes other family members and a welfare institution.
[c]Country of origin of the child.
[d]Parent with the highest education level.

Measures

Sociodemographic data. Child and family sociodemographic characteristics (educational level and socioeconomic status, birth country, and family type) were gathered using an ad hoc

data sheet, which included variables that were significantly related to victimization experiences (Turner, Finkelhor, &

Ormrod, 2007). In addition, information regarding crime type and the judicial measures imposed on the adolescent were obtained from the judicial file.

Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ; Finkelhor, Hamby et al., 2005). The interview version of the JVQ was translated into Spanish and Catalan by the Research Group on Child and Adolescent Victimization (GReVIA) at the University of Barcelona with the authors' permission. The final version used in this study was composed of 36 forms of victimization experiences that were grouped into six modules: conventional crime (9 items), caregiver vic- timization (4 items), victimization by peers and siblings (6 items), sexual victimization (6 items), witnessing and indirect victimization (9 items), and electronic victimization (2 items), (Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, & Hamby, 2005; Hamby & Finkelhor, 2001). A screener question using a yes/no response format rated as 1 or 0 is asked for each form of victimization. Previ- ous research

has shown moderate but significant correlations between the JVQ and trauma symptoms. The overall α for the original 34 JVQ items was
.80, but α was weaker for its aggregates (Finkelhor, Hamby, et al., 2005). Similar results were found in Spain by Forns, Kirchner, Soler, and Paretilla (2013) for the 34-item screening version. The full interview version of the JVQ, including 36 items and follow-up questions, has been applied to other samples in the same country (see, for example, Álvarez-Lister et al., 2014).

Method of Analysis

Prevalence rates for specific forms of victimization, JVQ modules and sub- modules were obtained for both lifetime and past year time frames. The *OR* was computed to compare sex and age groups (i.e., females vs. males and 14-15 vs. 16-17 years old). The *OR* was considered statistically significant when its 95% CI did not include a value of 1. The strength of association between parent's level of education and sex was

measured by Cramer's *V*. The Student's *t* statistic compared the number of victimization types experi- enced between age groups. The significance level was fixed at $p < .05$.

Polyvictimization was quantified by summing the total number of differ- ent victimization types (out of 36) experienced by each participant (Finkelhor, Ormrod et al., 2005) both during the lifetime and past year time periods. Polyvictims were defined by three different criteria in the present study: (a) Finkelhor and colleagues (Finkelhor, Ormrod et al., 2005) identified past year polyvictimization using 4 or more victimization types, (b) Finkelhor and col- laborators (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2009) identified lifetime and past year polyvictims as the 10% of youth who experienced the highest number of victimizations in each age group, and (c) Pereda and colleagues (Pereda

et al., 2014) established a cutoff point that corresponds to the 90th percentile for a community sample recruited from a South Western European country, which resulted in experiencing 9 or more victimization types for lifetime and 6 or more for the past year in the group aged 15 to 17 years.

Results

All participants had experienced at least one type of victimization in their lifetime, and 92.1% (92.7% of males and 89.5% of females, *OR* = 0.67, 95% CI = [0.12, 3.62]) experienced victimization during the last year. Table 2 shows the prevalence rates of JVQ modules, submodules and individual vic- timization experiences during lifetime and past year for the total sample and by gender and age.

Conventional Crime

Almost all youth interviewed (96.0%) were victims of some type of conven- tional crime during their lives. Lifetime crimes

against persons (93.1%; for example, assault, threatening or kidnapping) were more frequent than property crimes (72.3%; for example, theft or vandalism) and were the most common forms of assaults with or without a weapon (56.5% and 58.4%, respectively). No significant differences were found between males and females in relation to property crimes, but males were more likely to be the target of crimes against persons (96.3% and 78.9%, respectively; *OR* = 0.14, 95% CI = [0.03, 0.70]), specifically of assaults with a weapon (*OR* = 0.24, 95% CI = [0.08, 0.73]). In addition, older adolescents were more prone to being victims of assaults with a weapon (59.5% and 37.0%, respectively; *OR* = 2.49, 95% CI = [1.01, 6.19]).

Past year conventional crimes were reported by 75.2% of the youth. One year rates for crimes against persons (64.4%) were higher than those referred for property crimes (38.6%), and the most prevalent form was assault with a weapon (32.7%) and without a weapon (34.7%). Kidnapping and bias attacks had the lowest rates for both the lifetime and past year time frames.

Caregiver Victimization

Lifetime caregiver victimization was reported by 63.4% of the sample. Physical abuse was the most prevalent form of caregiver victimization in the overall group, affecting 50.5% of the youth. Females were more frequently victims of psychological/emotional abuse (52.6% vs. 24.7%; *OR* = 3.44, 95%
CI = [1.23, 9.67]) and neglect than males (21.1% vs. 4.9%; *OR* = 5.20, 95% CI = [1.17, 23.12]) during their lives, with no significant differences by age

Table 2. Lifetime and Past Year Victimization in Juvenile Offenders.

	Lifetime Victimization								Past Year Victimization							
	Victimized		Gender (%)			Age (%)			Victimized		Gender (%)			Age (%)		
Victimization	*n*	%	M	F	*OR*	14-15	16-17	*OR*	*n*	%	M	F	*OR*	14-15	16-17	*OR*
C. Conventional crimes	97	96.0	100.0	78.9	—	88.9	98.6	9.12	76	75.2	78.0	63.2	0.48	66.7	78.4	1.81
Property victimization	73	72.3	74.4	63.2	0.59	74.1	71.6	0.88	39	38.6	35.4	52.6	2.03	48.1	35.1	0.58
C1. Robbery	26	25.7	28.0	15.8	0.48	25.9	25.7	0.99	9	8.9	7.3	15.8	2.37	7.4	9.5	1.31
C2. Personal theft	32	31.7	32.9	26.3	0.73	22.2	35.1	1.90	16	15.8	14.6	21.1	1.56	18.5	14.9	0.77
C3. Vandalism	44	43.6	42.7	47.4	1.21	55.6	39.2	0.52	18	17.8	17.1	21.1	1.29	22.2	16.2	0.68
Crimes against persons	94	93.1	96.3	78.9	0.14*	85.2	95.9	4.12	65	64.4	68.3	47.4	0.42	55.6	67.6	1.67
C4. Assault with weapon	54	53.5	59.8	26.3	0.24*	37.0	59.5	2.49*	33	32.7	36.6	15.8	0.32	25.9	35.1	1.55
C5. Assault without weapon	59	58.4	62.2	42.1	0.44	48.1	62.2	1.77	35	34.7	36.6	26.3	0.62	29.6	36.5	1.36
C6. Attempted assault	43[a]	43.0	46.9	26.3	0.40	48.1	40.5	0.75	23[a]	23.0	24.7	15.8	0.57	33.3	19.2	0.47
C7. Threatened assault	43[a]	43.0	40.7	52.6	1.62	37.0	44.6	1.40	26[a]	26.0	22.2	42.1	2.54	22.2	27.4	1.32
C8. Kidnapping	4	4.0	3.7	5.3	1.46	7.4	2.7	0.35	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	—	0.0	0.0	—
C9. Bias attack	8	7.9	8.5	5.3	0.59	14.8	5.4	0.33	2	2.0	2.4	0.0	—	7.4	0.0	—
M. Caregiver victimization	64	63.4	59.8	78.9	2.53	70.4	60.8	0.65	24	23.8	18.3	47.4	4.02*	25.9	23.0	0.85
M1. Physical abuse	51	50.5	51.2	47.4	0.86	66.7	44.6	0.40	13	12.9	11.0	21.1	2.16	18.5	10.8	0.53
M2. Psychological/ emotional abuse	30	30.0	24.7	52.6	3.44*	29.6	29.7	1.00	15	14.9	11.0	31.6	3.74*	18.5	13.5	0.69
M3. Neglect	8	7.9	4.9	21.1	5.20*	7.4	8.1	1.10	3	3.0	2.4	5.3	2.22	0.0	4.1	—
M4. Custodial interference/ family abduction	7[a]	7.0	6.2	10.5	1.79	3.7	8.1	2.33	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	—	0.0	0.0	—

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

	Lifetime Victimization								Past Year Victimization							
	Victimized		Gender (%)			Age (%)			Victimized		Gender (%)			Age (%)		
Victimization	*n*	%	M	F	*OR*	14-15	16-17	*OR*	*n*	%	M	F	*OR*	14-15	16-17	*OR*
P. Peer and sibling victimization	87	86.1	87.8	78.9	0.52	81.5	87.8	1.64	66	65.3	65.9	63.2	0.89	66.7	64.9	0.92
P1. Gang or group assault	50	49.5	57.3	15.8	0.14*	44.4	51.4	1.32	32	31.7	35.4	15.8	0.34	33.3	31.1	0.90
P2. Peer or sibling assault	62	61.4	63.4	52.6	0.64	59.3	62.2	1.13	43	42.6	43.9	36.8	0.74	48.1	40.5	0.73
P3. Nonsexual genital assault	17	16.8	19.5	5.3	0.23	14.8	17.6	1.22	8	7.9	8.5	5.3	0.59	11.1	6.8	0.58
P4. Physical intimidation	21	20.8	20.7	21.1	1.02	22.2	20.3	0.89	10	9.9	9.8	10.5	1.09	11.1	9.5	0.84
P5. Verbal/relational aggression	20	19.8	19.5	21.1	1.10	22.2	18.9	0.82	9[a]	9.0	7.4	15.8	2.34	11.1	8.2	0.72
P6. Dating violence	31	30.7	29.3	36.8	1.41	33.3	29.7	0.85	18	17.8	17.1	21.1	1.29	22.2	16.2	0.68
S. Sexual victimization	16	15.8	9.8	42.1	6.73*	29.6	10.8	0.29*	7	6.9	3.7	21.1	7.02*	18.5	2.7	0.12*
With physical contact	8	7.9	4.9	21.1	5.20*	11.1	6.8	0.58	2	2.0	1.2	5.3	4.50	3.7	1.4	0.36
S1. Sexual abuse/assault by known adult	3	3.0	1.2	10.5	9.53	3.7	2.7	0.72	0[a]	0.0	0.0	0.0	—	0.0	0.0	—
S2. Sexual abuse/assault by unknown adult	3	3.0	3.7	0.0	—	3.7	2.7	0.72	1	1.0	1.2	0.0	—	3.7	0.0	—
S3. Sexual abuse/assault by peer/sibling	2	2.0	0.0	10.5	—	3.7	1.4	0.36	1	1.0	0.0	5.3	—	0.0	1.4	—
S4. Forced sex (including attempts)	2	2.0	1.2	5.3	4.50	0.0	2.7	—	1	1.0	0.0	5.3	—	0.0	1.4	—

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

	Lifetime Victimization								Past Year Victimization							
	Victimized		Gender (%)			Age (%)			Victimized		Gender (%)			Age (%)		
Victimization	*n*	%	M	F	*OR*	14-15	16-17	*OR*	*n*	%	M	F	*OR*	14-15	16-17	*OR*
Without physical contact	11	10.9	6.1	31.6	7.11*	25.9	5.4	0.16*	5	5.0	2.4	15.8	7.50*	14.8	1.4	0.08*
S5. Flashing/sexual exposure	9	8.9	4.9	26.3	6.96*	18.5	5.4	0.25	3	3.0	1.2	10.5	9.53	7.4	1.4	0.17
S6. Verbal sexual harassment	2	2.0	1.2	5.3	4.50	7.4	0.0	—	2	2.0	1.2	5.3	4.50	7.4	0.0	
W. Witnessing and indirect victimization	98	97.0	97.6	94.7	0.45	92.6	98.6	5.84	73	72.3	73.2	68.4	0.79	66.7	74.3	1.45
Family violence	44	43.6	42.7	47.4	1.21	59.3	37.8	0.42	5	5.0	4.9	5.3	1.08	7.4	4.1	0.53
W1. Witness to domestic violence	29	28.7	28.0	31.6	1.18	44.4	23.0	0.37*	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	—	0.0	0.0	—
W2. Witness to parent assault to sibling	24	23.8	25.6	15.8	0.54	29.6	21.6	0.65	5	5.0	4.9	5.3	1.08	7.4	4.1	0.53
Community violence	96	95.0	97.6	84.2	0.13*	92.6	95.9	1.89	73	72.3	73.2	68.4	0.79	66.7	74.3	1.45
W3. Witness to assault with weapon	83	82.2	86.6	63.2	0.27*	74.1	85.1	2.00	50	49.5	50.0	47.4	0.90	48.1	50.0	1.08
W4. Witness to assault without weapon	82	81.2	84.1	68.4	0.41	70.4	85.1	2.41	62	61.4	62.2	57.9	0.84	51.9	64.9	1.71
W5. Burglary of family household	18	17.8	14.6	31.6	2.69	11.1	20.3	2.03	6	5.9	3.7	15.8	4.94	3.7	6.8	1.88
W6. Murder of family member or friend	31	30.7	31.7	26.3	0.77	25.9	32.4	1.37	8	7.9	4.9	21.1	5.20*	7.4	8.1	1.10

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

	Lifetime Victimization								Past Year Victimization							
	Victimized		Gender (%)			Age (%)			Victimized		Gender (%)			Age (%)		
Victimization	*n*	%	M	F	*OR*	14-15	16-17	*OR*	*n*	%	M	F	*OR*	14-15	16-17	*OR*
W7. Witness to murder	24[a]	24.0	27.2	10.5	0.32	22.2	24.7	1.14	2	2.0	1.2	5.3	4.50	3.7	1.4	0.36
W8. Exposure to random shootings, terrorism or riots	31	30.7	32.9	21.1	0.54	25.9	32.4	1.37	8	7.9	8.5	5.3	0.59	7.4	8.1	1.10
W9. Exposure to war or ethnic conflict	1	1.0	1.2	0.0	—	3.7	0.0	—	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	—	0.0	0.0	—
INT. Electronic victimization	41	40.6	36.6	57.9	2.38	48.1	37.8	0.66	26	25.7	25.6	26.3	1.04	40.7	20.3	0.37*
INT1. Harassment	21	20.8	15.9	42.1	3.86*	25.9	18.9	0.67	9	8.9	8.5	10.5	1.26	14.8	6.8	0.42
INT2. Sexual solicitations	25	24.8	24.4	26.3	1.11	29.6	23.0	0.71	17	16.8	17.1	15.8	0.91	25.9	13.5	0.45

Note. When prevalence was 0% or 100%, *OR* was not computed. *OR* = odds ratio.

[a]Prevalence estimated from 100 subjects (1 missing case).

**OR* is significantly different from 1 at the 5% level.

Regarding past year victimization, females reported more frequent victim- ization by caregivers than males (47.4% and 18.3%, respectively; *OR* = 4.02, 95% CI = [1.39, 11.61]). Females also reported more psychological/ emotional abuse than their male counterparts (31.6% vs. 11.0%; *OR* = 3.74, 95% CI = [1.14, 12.30]).

Custodial interference had the lowest prevalence rate in this module, as there were no cases for past year period.

Peer and Sibling Victimization

Some type of peer and sibling victimization was reported by 86.1% of the youth for lifetime and 65.3% in the past year. Assault by peers or siblings was the most common form of victimization for both time frames, with rates of 61.4% and 42.6%. Gang or group assault was the second most frequent event, as males had higher rates than females, but differences were only significant for the lifetime time period (57.3% and 15.8%, respectively; *OR* = 0.14, 95% CI = [0.04, 0.52]). Physical intimidation and verbal/relational aggression affected similar percentages (approximately 20%) of males and females and younger and older youth for lifetime, and both forms of victimization had lower prevalence rates than experiences related to dating violence (30.7%).

There were no significant age differences between 14- to 15-year-olds and 16- to 17-year-olds for this module.

Sexual Victimization

Sexual victimization affected a smaller but noticeable percentage of the youth, as rates were 15.8% during one's lifetime and 6.9% in the past year, with important differences by gender and age. Females reported higher sex- ual victimization prevalence rates for the past year (21.1% vs. 3.7%; *OR* = 7.02, 95% CI = [1.42, 34.63]) and during

their lifetime (42.1% vs.
9.8%; *OR* = 6.73, 95% CI = [2.10, 21.61]) than males. Similarly, females reported more sexual victimization involving physical contact (e.g., sexual abuse/assault and forced sex) during their lifetime (21.1% vs. 4.9%; *OR* = 5.20, 95% CI = [1.17, 23.12]) and also without contact (e.g., flashing or ver- bal sexual harassment) for both lifetime (31.6% vs. 6.1%; *OR* = 7.11, 95%
CI = [1.89, 26.72]) and the past year (15.8% vs. 2.4%; *OR* = 7.50, 95% CI = [1.16, 48.56]). For experiences with physical contact, sexual abuse or assault by known adults and peers had the highest prevalence rates for girls (10.5% both). The highest prevalence rates for boy's sexual victimization were per- petrated by unknown adults (3.7%).

There were also age differences in sexual victimization. Younger youth reported more sexual victimization for both lifetime (*OR* = 0.29, 95% CI = [0.10, 0.87]) and the past year (*OR* = 0.12, 95% CI = [0.02, 0.67]), and more experiences not involving physical contact for both time frames (*OR* = 0.16, 95% CI = [0.04, 0.61], and *OR* = 0.08, 95% CI = [0.01, 0.74], respectively)
than older youth.

Witnessing Violence and Indirect Victimization

Nearly all youth (97.0%) had witnessed some type of victimization or expe- rienced it indirectly during their lifetime, with 72.3% during the past year. Similar rates were found for exposure to community violence (e.g., witness- ing an assault, household burglary or murder; 92.0% for lifetime and 72.3% for the past year). Males were more frequently exposed to this type of vio- lence in their lifetime than females (97.6% and 84.2%, respectively; *OR* = 0.13, 95% CI = [0.02, 0.86]). Witnessing an

assault was the most prevalent form of community violence both in one's lifetime and the past year. It should be noted that witnessing assaults with (82.2%) or without a weapon (81.2%) in one's lifetime were equally frequent. In this regard, males more frequently witnessed assaults with a weapon than females (86.6% vs. 63.2%; *OR* = 0.27, 95% CI = [0.09, 0.82]). Extreme forms of violence, such as the murder of a family member/friend or witnessing a murder, affected a noticeable propor- tion of youth (30.7% and 24.0%, respectively) in their lifetime, and showed important reductions in the past year (7.9% and 2.0%). Females more fre- quently experienced a murder of a loved one in the past year than males (21.1% vs. 4.9%; *OR* = 5.20, 95% CI = [1.17, 23.12]).

Exposure to family violence (i.e., witnessing domestic violence or a par- ent assault a sibling) was reported by 43.6% of the youth for lifetime and 5.0% for the last year. Therefore, for most youth, family violence generally occurred in the past, with recent cases of assault to a sibling by parents but not between parents or their partners. Youth aged 14 to 15 years were more likely to be exposed to their parents' intimate partner violence at some point in their lifetime than the oldest youth (44.4% vs. 23.0%; *OR* = 0.37, 95% CI = [0.15, 0.95]).

Electronic Victimization

Approximately 40% of the youth were victimized using electronic devices during their lifetime and a quarter in the last year. Recent events of electronic victimization were more frequent in the youngest age group (40.7% and 20.3%, respectively; *OR* = 0.37, 95% CI = [0.14, 0.96]). Both lifetime

electronic harassment and sexual solicitations happened to one in five and one in four youth, respectively. Victims of electronic harassment for the life- time period were more frequently girls than boys (*OR* = 3.86, 95% CI = [1.30, 11.44]), with a prevalence rate of 42.1% for females and 15.9% for males.

Polyvictimization

Among those victimized, the mean total number of past year victimization types was around five (*M* = 5.25, *SD* = 2.90, *Skewness* = 0.27), with a range between 1 and 11. No significant age differences were found, $t(91) = 1.091$, $p = .28$. Considering the classification proposed by Finkelhor, Ormrod et al. (2005) to classify victims and polyvictims based on last year experiences, the *victim group* (one to three victimization types), *low polyvictim group* (four to six victimization types), and *high polyvictim group* (seven or more victimiza- tion types) were each composed of 30.7% of the sample (Table 3). Therefore, using criteria based on a community sample, 61.3% of this sample of youth offenders could be considered past year polyvictims.

The mean total number of lifetime victimization types was around 10 (*M* = 9.90, *SD* = 3.79, *Skewness* = −0.02) and ranged between 2 and 22, with no significant age differences, $t(99) = 0.812$, $p = .42$. Previous studies have identified lifetime polyvictims as the top 10% of the distribution (Finkelhor et al., 2009). In the present study, the polyvictim group defined with this method gave a threshold of 15 and 16 victimization types for those aged 14 to 15 and 16 to 17 years, respectively (Table 3). Using this method for past year victimization the threshold corresponding to the 90th percentile remained constant at 10 victimization types.

Similarly, using the threshold corresponding to the top 10%, but in a com- munity sample aged 15 to 17 years from a similar geographical area (Pereda et al., 2014),

juvenile offenders were categorized into a lifetime polyvictim group (experiencing 9 or more victimization types) composed of 65.3% of the sample and a past year polyvictim group (experiencing 6 or more victim- ization types) formed by 41.6% of the sample. Further analysis explored the number of JVQ modules of victimization experienced by lifetime and past year polyvictims in comparison with other victims (see Table 4). To have a large enough group of polyvictims, a broad definition of polyvictimization was chosen; therefore, the cutoff points cor- responding to the top 10% for a community sample were used (see last rows in Table 3, that is, 9+ for lifetime and 6+ for past year). The majority of life- time polyvictims experienced victimization in four or more modules (93.9%) as did more than half of the past year polyvictims (64.3%), but for victims, these percentages were far smaller (40.0% and 3.9%, respectively).

Table 3. Victimization Types and Score Thresholds According to Age Group.

	Lifetime (%)			Past Year (%)		
	14-15 (*n* = 27)	16-17 (*n* = 74)	Total (*n* = 101)	14-15 (*n* = 27)	16-17 (*n* = 74)	Total (*n* = 101)
No victimization	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.4	8.1	7.9
1-3 victimizations	n/a	n/a	n/a	25.9	32.4	30.7
4-6 victimizations	n/a	n/a	n/a	25.9	32.4	30.7
7 victimizations and over	n/a	n/a	n/a	40.7	27.0	30.7
Number of victims	27	74	101	25	68	93
M number of victimizations among victims (*SD*)	10.00 (4.07)	9.86 (3.72)	9.90 (3.79)	5.72 (3.14)	5.07 (2.81)	5.25 (2.90)
Child above *M*	55.5	51.3	55.4	48.1	39.2	41.6
Number of victimization in the top 10th percentile	16+	15+	16+	10+	10+	10+
Child above top 10th percentile	3.7	9.5	4.0	3.7	9.5	7.9
Number of victimization in the top 10th percentile based on a community sample[a]	—	—	9+	—	—	6+
Child above top 10 percentile based on a community sample[a]	—	—	65.3	—	—	41.6

Note. Categories are based on Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, and Hamby (2005) criterion for past year victimization. n/a = not applicable.
[a]Based on the Pereda, Guilera, and Abad (2014) criterion for a community sample (aged 15 to 17 years) recruited in northeastern Spain.

Discussion

This study portrays victimology profiles for a group of juvenile offenders who were under custodial and noncustodial jurisdictions in northeastern Spain. It offers a perspective that moves away from adolescents' aggressor role to focus on their recent and lifetime victimization experiences, based on self-reports. This is one of the few studies conducted from this perspective, internationally, and, to the best of our knowledge, the first performed in Spain.

Victimization Among Juvenile Offenders

The results showed that the level of violence directed at these young people is very high. All respondents had experienced at least one form of victimization

Table 4. Percentage of Number of Victimization Modules According to Lifetime and Past Year Polyvictimization Status.

	Lifetime		Past Year	
Number of Modules[a]	Polyvictims (n = 66) (%)	Victims (n = 35) (%)	Polyvictims (n = 42) (%)	Victims (n = 51) (%)
One module	0.0	2.9	0.0	21.6
Two modules	0.0	20.0	0.0	51.0
Three modules	6.1	37.1	35.7	23.5
Four modules	54.5	34.3	38.1	3.9
Five modules	31.8	5.7	23.8	0.0
Six modules	7.6	0.0	2.4	0.0

[a]Modules included are from the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire: Conventional crimes, victimization by caregivers, peer and sibling victimization, sexual victimization, witnessing and indirect victimization, and electronic victimization.

in their lifetime while 92.1% had experienced victimization within the past year. These percentages are higher than those found in a community sample of adolescents aged between 15 and 17 years in the same country (87.6% and 70.0%, respectively, in Pereda et al., 2014), and in another community sample of children aged between 11 and 17 years in the United Kingdom (83.7% and 57.1%, respectively, in Radford et al., 2013). However, our results are similar to those obtained with detained and arrested

North American youth (Abram et al., 2004), as 92.5% of the youth reported one or more potentially traumatic experience.

It should be noticed that the majority of our sample belonged to low or medium-low family socioeconomic status and that most of the parents of the participants had a very low educational level. This is an important difference when comparing this sample with the community sample of Spanish adoles- cents (Pereda et al., 2014) and should be taken into consideration when inter- preting the results obtained. Regarding the relationship between socioeconomic status and delinquent offending, it has been a subject of considerable contro- versy in criminological research. Hollingshead socioeconomic status itself has been related with different psychopathological syndromes, including delin- quent behavior in children and adolescents (De Carlo Santiago, Wadsworth, & Stump, 2011). Longitudinal studies have also shown that antisocial youth dis- proportionally come from low socioeconomic status families (see the review by Murray & Farrington, 2010). But other studies show that socioeconomic status seems to be a relevant variable when explaining delinquent behavior only when it interacts with other variables, such as the individual genotype (Aslund et al., 2013) or the culture where this relationship is assessed (Savolainen, Hughes, & Bjarnason, 2013). In addition, some researchers have suggested that the link between socioeconomic status and delinquency is medi- ated by poor child-rearing practices in the family (Fergusson, Swain-Campbell, & Horwood, 2004; Larzelere & Patterson, 1990). However, regarding the rela- tionship between socioeconomic status and victimization, studies using the same victimization instrument as in the present research have reported that low levels of parental education and low socioeconomic status are not significantly connected to polyvictimization (Ellonen & Salmi, 2011; Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007b) although these are risk factors associated with different forms of childhood maltreatment

(Black, Heyman, & Smith Slep, 2001; Black, Smith Slep, & Heyman, 2001).

Almost all of these young people have suffered some type of criminal offense against the person (96%) or exposure to community violence (95%) throughout their lifetime and very frequently in the last year (64.4% and 72.3%, respectively). These figures are approximately between 2.5 and 2.0 times higher than those found in youth of the same age from the general population (Pereda et al., 2014). It should be noted that the trend found in the general population is reversed in the juvenile justice sample (i.e., crimes against the person are more common than property offenses in this sample). Moreover, physical aggression by nonfamilial or nonclosely related persons is higher in this sample than what has been identified in samples of North American youth involved in the juvenile justice system (35.3% in Abram et al., 2004). In turn, lifetime victimization by peers was reported by 86.1% of the youth and often occurred in the past year. When compared with the general population, lifetime victimization by peers is approximately 1.5 times higher for lifetime and almost 2.0 times higher for the last year (Pereda et al., 2014; Radford et al., 2013). This violent con- text extends to the electronic environment of the adolescents, where life- time victimization prevalence rates reached 40.6% and last year reached 25.7%: 2.6 times higher than that obtained by the general population (Pereda et al., 2014). In this sense, it is important to be mindful of the impact of victimization by and exposure to community violence on mental health, as evidenced by Fowler, Tompsett, Braciszewski, Jacques-Tiura, and Baltes (2009). In addition, young people's exposure to groups, areas, and contexts that have high levels of violence is similar in both victimiza- tion and offending processes (Fagan & Mazerolle, 2011; Jennings, Higgins, Tewksbury, Gover, & Piquero, 2010) and should be taken into account when planning intervention programs, knowing that the adolescent will,

most likely, return to those violent contexts.

Caregivers' victimization and being exposed to family violence through- out one's lifetime showed prevalence rates of 63.4% and 43.6%, respec- tively, and were 2.3 and 5.4 times, respectively, higher than those obtained in the Spanish general population (Pereda et al., 2014), and 2.9 and 2.5 times higher than those obtained in the United Kingdom (Radford et al., 2013). However, the prevalence rates for victimization experiences in the last year time period were similar for Spanish, juvenile justice, and general population samples. The results showed that these two types of victimiza- tion were more frequent in adolescent's past than the present; however, this should not divert our attention from the fact that these youth have suffered very frequent episodes of domestic violence, as shown by other studies analyzing serious forms of abuse (Croysdale et al., 2008; Ford et al., 2008). In this sense, the violence that the adolescent is exposed to is not limited to his or her circle of friends or neighborhood, as his or her family members also show a high level of violent behavior (Fagan, 2005; Ryan et al., 2013; Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2001). Meanwhile, approximately one third of the sample came from residential care centers because, for different rea- sons, their families of origin did not provide the attention and resources needed for healthy development. The close relationship between child pro- tection and juvenile justice systems was also found in another study that analyzed this phenomenon in the same country (Oriol-Granado, Sala-Roca, & Filella Guiu, 2015) and has been shown in international studies (Jonson- Reid & Barth, 2000a, 2000b; Ryan et al., 2007). Finally, sexual victimiza- tion had the lowest prevalence rates in boys but was experienced by 42.1% of girls. The percentage of sexually victimized delinquent girls is much higher than what is found in community samples, but it is similar to rates reported by girls inside juvenile justice facilities (36.0% in Croysdale et al., 2008). This result is in line

with studies that have shown a close relation- ship between sexual victimization and delinquent behavior in girls (Goodkind et al., 2006; Siegel & Williams, 2003).

For the individual forms of victimization, physical aggression in dating relationships was reported by approximately one in three adolescents and was much higher than what has been obtained in other studies (Finkelhor et al., 2009; Pereda et al., 2014; Radford et al., 2013). The similar levels of dating violence between boys and girls are in accord with Spanish studies (Muñoz Rivas, Graña Gómez, O'Leary, & González Lozano, 2007) and other international works (Straus, 2008). In addition, the high exposure of these young people to situations of extreme violence, such as the murder of a family member/friend or witnessing a murder, are similar to the results obtained with other samples of young offenders (Abram et al., 2004; Ford et al., 2008).

Gender and Age Differences in Victimization Profiles

For gender differences, boys were more frequently exposed to physical vio- lence, such as direct aggression toward them by people or gangs, or witness- ing aggressions to others. In contrast, girls were more often victims of forms of violence that could be considered more subtle and covert (e.g., emotional abuse or neglectful behaviors by caregivers), and more sexual victimization and electronic harassment. Although the number of young female offenders in the study is too small to draw any reliable conclusions regarding gender differences, this trend is repeated in different cultural contexts (Cyr et al., 2013; Finkelhor et al., 2009; Pereda et al., 2014), and this differential risk should be taken into account when planning prevention and intervention pro- grams for young people. Regarding age, older adolescents frequently suf- fered physical attacks, but the younger ones had experienced more sexual victimization and intimate partner violence exposure. Once again, this find- ing shows the close relationship that exists between family-related victimiza- tion,

sexual victimization, and committing criminal acts at an early age.

Polyvictimization in Juvenile Offenders

It should be highlighted that victimization is widespread among these young people as well as there is a high accumulation of victimization experiences. Different studies have showed a positive association between deviant and criminal lifestyles and crime victimization (Ford et al., 2010; Gilbert et al., 2009; Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2001). This relationship, however, seems to be in both directions. Adolescents who engage in deviant lifestyles, such as gang involvement, substance abuse, and committing delinquent acts are not only more likely to be victimized but also adolescents who are victimized are more likely to engage in deviant behavior (Zhang, Welte, & Wieczorek, 2001). Our transversal study cannot support any of these perspectives although taking into account the high level of lifetime victimization that the majority of these adolescents report before entering into facilities, we can assume that victimization seems to precede delinquency rather than the oppo- site (Cuevas et al., 2007).

The average of different victimization types throughout life for the youth in the juvenile justice system is almost twice that found in the general popula- tion, both nationally (Pereda et al., 2014) and internationally (Cyr et al., 2013). Polyvictimization is associated with widespread violence in different contexts, and these young people tend to experience victimization in four or more domains. In this sense, complex trauma exposure could be very fre- quent among juvenile justice–involved youth as noted by Ford et al. (2012).

Complex trauma consequences, such as impairments in emotional regulation and interpersonal relatedness (Cook et al., 2005), can compromise develop- ment and social integration and, therefore, place these youth at high risk for psychological problems and delinquency (Ford et al., 2010).

Limitations

The present study had some limitations that should be considered and that mainly affect the representativeness of the sample. The group of youth under noncusto- dial measures is very small compared with the actual composition of the total population. Two factors made it difficult to collect information from this group: the low acceptance of research by professionals who can facilitate access to ado- lescents and the fact that the adolescent or his or her parents had to move to the place of the interview. In addition, the inability to compare the prevalence of victimization inside and outside detention centers due to the small group of open regime teams is unfortunate because victimization in these two settings may have different implications for the prevention and understanding of polyvictimization in general. Moreover, the group of girls is relatively small for comparisons by gender although the ratio of female participants in the present study is higher than the actual proportion of delinquent girls in Spain. Finally, the voluntary nature of participation may also have biased the data, similar to the bias observed in other victimization surveys. Even though participation in the present study is moderate and is in line with other international studies working with this type of sample (Abram et al., 2004), the potential sampling bias should be taken into consider- ation. However, given the relatively limited availability of international data on polyvictimization within juvenile justice populations (Abram et al., 2004; Croysdale et al., 2008; Ford et al., 2013), especially from southern countries as Spain, and using an instrument that allow cross-cultural comparison, this study may yet

make an important contribution to the literature.

Research Implications

The identification of groups of polyvictims still remains controversial, thus the definition of a polyvictimized group among juvenile justice–involved youth who are expected to be highly victimized should be further explored using diverse methodologies. The present study suggests that depending on the cutoff point taken as a reference, the polyvictim group can vary greatly (i.e., can be set between 10% and 65.3% for lifetime victimization and between 41.6% and 61.3% for last year victimization). Future research should also use an empirical definition of polyvictimization (e.g., via cluster or latent class analysis), as proposed by Ford, Wasser, and Connor (2011) or Ford et al.(2010), allowing one to test if polyvictimization is related to clinical or psy- chological distress criteria.

Clinical and Prevention Implications

As other authors (Abram et al., 2004) note, the high level of victimization that has been found in young offenders shows that there is a need for resources intended to punish youth for their criminal behavior to be balanced with the treatment of their emotional needs. The juvenile justice system should address more effectively the needs of youth whose antisocial behaviors may be the result of victimization, and it should provide support for young offenders to develop into socially integrated adults (Evans-Chase, 2014). Screening for victimization should be routinely performed when youth come into contact with the juvenile justice system. The subsequent interventions should con- sider the history of victimization and should recognize the possible suffering that has been generated. They should also take into account the influence

violence has had on adolescents' attitudes and their way of relating to others as a starting point for recovery. Furthermore, programs or services to address multiple, co-occurring forms of violence exposure should be implemented in the justice system as polyvictimization has been revealed as a frequent reality in young offenders. In addition, as a significant rate of recent victimization experiences occur while the adolescents are involved in the judicial system, they must have a safe and reliable way of reporting victimization and getting help both while in custody and under noncustodial measures.

Conclusion

In summary, the main contribution of this study is to provide data on the vic- timization of a high risk group of adolescents that has rarely been studied (i.e., youth involved in juvenile justice) based on information provided by the young people themselves, thereby overcoming the disadvantages and possi- ble underestimation that official statistics and police reports have previously shown. Another strength of the study is the use of a valid and reliable instru- ment that has been already applied to samples of youth from the same cultural context as well as to samples from other countries; this strength favors the cross-cultural comparison of results and allows for observation of the victi- mology profile of youth from different cultural environments.

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