Child Victimization and Poly-Victimization in a Community Sample of Adolescents in Northern Chile

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to report the prevalence of youth victimization and poly-victimization in northern Chile. Using the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire, a sample of 706 ado- lescents ages 12 to 17 were surveyed. The results indicated that 89% of the participants had experienced victimization at least once in their lives and 76.8% had experienced at least 1 experience of victimization in the past year. The most frequent forms were conventional crimes (70% and 54.7%), witnessing and indirect victimization (63.2% and 45.2%), and peer and sibling victimization (50.0% and 34.6%), for the lifetime and the past year, respectively. Sexual victimization was less com- mon for both time periods, but still relevant (15.9% lifetime and 9.9% past year). Older females and younger adolescents presented a higher risk of victimization particularly in conventional crimes and victimization by caregivers. As for poly-victi- mization, 21% of the adolescents presented between 4 and 6 different forms of victimization (the low poly-victimization group) and 16% reported seven or more (the high poly-victi- mization group) in the last year. The results showed that child and adolescent victimization is a significant problem in Chile. Percentages of victimization in Chilean adolescents were higher than those found in Europe or North America. Results from the group of poly-victims reinforces the need to evaluate the multiple forms of victimization that affect adolescents in Chile and to prioritize it in the design of the treatment of the consequences of violence, taking into account differences in gender and age.

Child and adolescent victimization is a serious public health problem that affects thousands of children and adolescents around the world. (Stoltenborgh, Bakermans-Kranenburg, Alink, & IJzendoorn, 2015). Finkelhor (2007) highlighted the need for a comprehensive analysis of children's and adolescents' victimization experiences and of the complex relationships that exist between different experiences of violence in child- hood. This new field of study, termed "developmental victimology," exam- ines the phenomenon of victimization during childhood and youth; itidentifies trends and risks at different ages and aids the development of appropriate prevention, detection, and intervention strategies (Lussier, Wemmers, & Cyr., 2016).

During the last decade, research applying the developmental victimology perspective has focused on analyzing the percentage of children who are exposed to multiple forms of violence, and has shown that this phenomenon of poly-victimization is much more widespread than previously believed. The role of multiple victimization experiences in different episodes and their effect on a child's well-being (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007), has become an important focus of interest in recent years. Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, and Hamby (2005b) were the first authors to show the frequency of this problem. After interviewing 2,030 children between the ages of 2 and 17 in the United States, they found that 22% reported being victims of four or more types of victimization, including conventional crimes, caregiver, and sexual victimization. Of these, 15% had suffered four to six different forms of victimization, and 7% had experienced seven or more. Since then, several investigations into child and

adolescent poly-victimization have been carried out, mainly in American and European samples. The most significant are the ones conducted in Canada (Cyr et al., 2013), United Kingdom (Radford, Corral, Bradley, & Fisher, 2013), Finland (Ellonen & Salmi, 2011), Switzerland (Aho, Gren-Landell, & Svedin, 2014), and Spain (Pereda, Guilera, & Abad, 2014). Interestingly, this perspective has also been applied in studies in Eastern cultures, such as China (Dong, Cao, Cheng, Cui, & Li, 2013) and Vietnam (Le, Holton, Nguyen, Wolfe, & Fisher, 2015). In all of these studies, the percentage of poly-victimization ranges between 9% and 31.1% over the lifetime of young people and between 7% and 15.2% in the last year. These figures illustrate the extent of a problem that seems to be common to most cultural contexts.

Studies on child victimization in Chile

Little is known about the prevalence of child poly-victimization in community samples from Latin America, despite the high levels of violence reported in the continent (see the reviews by Garmendia-Lorena, 2011 or Imbusch, Misse, & Carrión, 2011) and the apparently greater tolerance of violence against children in this context (see, e.g., the widespread use of corporal punishment in Zolotor & Puzia, 2010).

Particularly, in Chile, most of the research conducted has focused exclusively on specific forms of child abuse, mainly sexual abuse, using a retrospective methodology in adult samples (e.g., Lehrer, Lehrer, & Koss, 2013; Lehrer, Lehrer, & Oyarzún, 2009; Vizcarra & Balladares, 2003). The few studies that have asked children directly about their experiences of victimization have followed the same pattern, focusing on a single context (i.e., family, school) and a single form of victimization (bullying). Studies applying the conceptual framework of poly-victimization and using standard measures to detect several forms of child and adolescent victimization in a broad and comprehensive way have been conducted in community samples in other countries (Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, & Hamby, 2005c), but not in Chile

The recent study by Guerra, Ocaranza, and Weinberger (2016) is an exception, but presents several limitations. Also adopting the developmental victimology perspective, these authors analyzed poly-victimization in a small sample of Chilean youth in psychological treatment under the aegis of the social services. The authors showed that searching for social support acts as a protective factor and decreases the adverse influence of poly-victimization over externalizing symptoms. However, and in addition to the specific characteristics of the sample, the pathways to poly-victimization mentioned in previous studies were not recorded, and so no comparisons with previous studies of larger community samples (e.g., Pereda et al., 2014) can be performed. Thus, although the relevance of the study by Guerra et al. (2016) should not be underestimated, our use of a community sample represents a first step on the way to offering a realistic picture of poly-victimization in Chilean children and adolescents.

The current study

In this context, the present study aims to establish the prevalence of a wide range of victimization experiences and poly-victimization, both throughout the lifetime and over the last year, in community adolescents in northern Chile. As suggested in previous studies (Cyr et al., 2013; Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2009; Pereda et al., 2014), we take into account the possible differences due to sociodemographic characteristics such as sex and age. Research in non-Western or nonindustrial countries can help identify and explore the role that culturally specific practices and ideologies play in child and adolescent victimization. Our research aims to broaden the understand- ing of the extension of violence against children and adolescents in Latin America. It will facilitate comparison with studies conducted in developed countries and, therefore, highlight cultural factors that may explain the possible differences found between studies.

Method

Participants

Using nonprobability sampling, 12 primary and secondary schools in the city of Arica in northern Chile were selected. These 12 schools account for 10% of all the educational centers in the city. Arica has a total adolescent population of 20,874 between the ages of 12 and 17 (10,559 boys and 10,285 girls). The study sample consisted of 706 adolescents (347 boys and 359 girls) between the ages of 12 and 17 years (M = 15 years and 8 months; SD = 1.32), mainly living with their two parents (61.5%). Most of participants were from Hispanic (65.7%) and Aymara ethnic background (28.8%), from a middle (61.6%) and low (29.2%) socioeconomic status.

Measures

Sociodemographic data

Sociodemographic data were collected through a survey designed to obtain information regarding age (grouped into 12–14 and 15–17 years old), gender (male and female), family composition (living with two parents, living with one parent, and extended family such as living with another family member in the same house) and ethnic background (Hispanic; Aymara; non-Hispanic white; and other, including Arabian, Asian, or African).

Victimization

Victimization was assessed through the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ; Finkelhor, Hamby, Ormrod, & Turner, 2005a). A version adapted to the Chilean context was used based on the Spanish translation of the instru- ment made by the Research Group on Child and Adolescent Victimization (GReVIA) of the University of Barcelona. The JVQ includes 36 forms of victimization against children and adolescents, grouped into six domains: conventional crime (9 items), caregiver victimization (4 items), peer and sibling victimization (6 items), sexual victimization (6 items), witnessing and indirect victimization (9 items), and electronic victimization (2 items). The

JVQ was administered as a self-report. This format can be used as a tool for early victimization detection, and its questions focus on different types of victimization suffered by the children and adolescents throughout their lives and during the last year. Overall, the JVQ has demonstrated good psychometric properties (Finkelhor et al., 2005a), and a reliability between 0.82 and 0.84 for the evaluation of victimization in the last year and over the lifetime respectively. The Spanish version of the JVQ has also obtained good psychometric properties (Pereda, Gallardo-Pujol, & Guilera, 2016).

Procedure

The investigation proceeded in accordance with the legislation regarding sex crimes and child abuse against children and adolescents in the Republic of Chile. Appropriate measures were taken in the case of the reporting and/or notification of event that constitute crimes but had not been reported to the competent authorities (the Prosecutor's Office, the Chilean Police, or the Family Court if the perpetrator is another child). Since the research was conducted in a school context, and since most schools in Chile have a protocol to detect cases of child abuse, we conducted a coordination meeting with the participating schools, specifically with teams of psychosocial support and school counseling so as to activate the protocol in the case of detection of any cases of abuse. After obtaining a positive response from the schools, the classrooms where the questionnaires were to be applied were selected and parental authorization was requested. In all cases, informed consent from the adolescents was required and a full explanation of the objectives and procedures of the study was given. Subjects were also notified that they were entitled to stop participating in the study at any time should they wish to do so. None of the adolescents refused to participate. Confidentiality was ensured and the students' names were replaced with a code that was only known to the main investigator for referral and follow-up purposes. The questionnaires were applied in 2014 during school hours. An interviewer trained in assessing children was appointed for each course and made contact with the classroom teacher, requesting authorization to be alone in the room with the students and to distribute the instruments.

The results indicated that 82.2% of the cases of child abuse that constituted a crime (sexual abuse under Chilean law) were reported before the study, 16.2% were deemed unprosecutable (in Chile, 5 years after the occurrence of a crime there are no legal grounds for prosecution), and 1.6% (two cases) had not been reported and corresponded to adolescents of 14 years of age. These cases were referred to psychosocial teams so that they could identify the adolescents' situation and activate legal proceedings if required. The con- fidentiality of the adolescents' data was protected at all times.

Data analysis

The prevalence of different types of victimization throughout the lifetime and in the last 12 months was calculated for the 12–14 and 15–17 year age

groups and also according to gender. Poly-victimization was calculated from the total number of victimizations that each adolescent had suffered in each time span (throughout their lifetime and during the last year), ranging from 1 to 36 following the criteria proposed by Finkelhor et al. (2005a).

First, poly-victims were defined as the 10% of the adolescents who have been exposed to the highest number of victimizations, in each age group both for the last year and over the lifetime (see Cyr et al., 2013; Finkelhor et al., 2009; Pereda et al., 2014). In addition, for some of the analyses a categorical measure was created to represent children who could be considered "poly-victims" (Finkelhor et al., 2007). Children experiencing four or more types of victimization within the past year (i.e., those above the mean number of types for all victimized children) were defined as poly-victims. Following the distinction made by Finkelhor et al. (2005c), last year poly-victims were subdivided into those with low degrees of poly-victimization (those reporting between four and six forms of victimization) and those with high degrees (seven or more types).

To compare the frequency of victimization we used the Pearson's Chi-square test between the age groups (12–14 and 15–17 years old) and gender (male and female), and calculated the odds ratio (*OR*) to quantify the association between these variables; the result was considered statistically significant when the confidence interval (95%) did not include the value 1. When comparing the number of victimizations throughout the lifetime and over the past year between the age groups using the Mann-Whitney test, a $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

Results

From the 706 adolescents assessed, 89% had experienced some form of victimization at some point in their lives (88.6% females and 89.3% males, *OR* = 0.93, 95% CI [0.58, 1.48]). With regard to the last year, 76.8% of the participants (78.8% of females and 74.6% of males, *OR* = 1.27, 95% CI [0.89, 1.80]) reported some type of victimization during this period. Table 1 dis- plays the prevalence of various forms of victimization for the lifetime and last year periods, according to JVQ domains, subdomains, and items. It also shows differences regarding age and gender.

Conventional crime

Conventional crime victimization was reported by 70% of the sample population at some point in their lives, and by 54.7% in the previous year. In both time frames, crimes against property were more frequent than against people (60.8% and 43.2%, respectively, for lifetime victimization; and 43.2% and 32.9%, respectively, for the last year) and the most common forms were personal theft (40.4% lifetime and 26.5% last year) for property crimes, and assault without a weapon (23.7% lifetime and 15.3% last year) in crimes against people.

Younger children were more likely to be the target of these types of

victimization than older adolescents in both time frames, lifetime (72.7% and 69.8%, respectively) and in the last 12 months (59.1% vs. 53.9%). Females also tended to have higher lifetime victimization rates than males with regard to conventional crimes as a whole and also to their specific forms. However, hardly any significant gender and age differences were found for lifetime victimization—the only exception being attempted assault, in which females (*OR* = 1.64, 95% CI [1.09, 2.47]) and younger children (*OR* = 0.59, 95% CI [0.36, 0.97]) had statistically higher levels of victimization. Regarding last year victimization, no age or gender differ- ences were found, and males only had higher levels of victimization in the crimes against people subdomain.

Table 1. Lifetime and last year victimization prevalence in Chilean adolescents.

	Lifetime Victimization								Last year Victimization							
	Victimized		Gender (%)			Age (%)			Victimized		Gender (%)			Age (%)		
Victimization	*n*	%	M	F	*OR*	12–14	15–17	*OR*	*n*	%	M	F	*OR*	12–14	15–17	*OR*
C. Conventional crimes	496	70.3	69.2	71.3	1.11	72.7	69.8	0.87	386	54.7	53.9	55.4	1.06	59.1	53.9	0.81
Property victimization	429	60.8	58.8	62.7	1.18	66.4	59.7	0.75	305	43.2	41.5	44.8	1.15	46.4	42.6	0.86
C1. Robbery	158	22.4	20.2	24.5	1.29	26.4	21.6	0.77	102	14.4	13.0	15.9	1.27	12.7	14.8	1.19
C2. Personal theft	285	40.4	36.9	43.7	1.33	44.5	39.6	0.82	187	26.5	25.9	27.0	1.06	31.8	25.5	0.73
C3. Vandalism	238	33.7	32.3	35.1	1.35	35.5	33.4	0.91	152	21.5	19.9	23.1	1.21	22.7	21.3	0.92
Crimes against people	305	43.2	42.9	43.5	1.02	46.4	42.6	0.86	232	32.9	34.9	30.9	0.84	40.0	31.5	0.69
C4. Assault with weapon	73	10.3	9.8	10.9	1.12	14.5	9.6	0.62	60	8.5	10.1	7.0	0.67	13.6	7.6	0.52
C5. Assault without weapon	167	23.7	24.8	22.6	0.88	29.1	22.7	0.71	108	15.3	17.3	13.4	0.74	20.0	14.4	0.68
C6. Attempted assault	113	16.0	12.7	19.2	1.64*	22.7	14.8	0.59*	57	8.1	7.5	8.6	1.17	11.8	7.4	0.60
C7. Threatened assault	160	22.7	23.1	22.3	0.96	26.4	22.0	0.79	99	14.0	15.9	12.3	0.74	15.5	13.8	0.87
C8. Kidnapping	28	4.0	2.6	5.3	2.10	3.6	4.0	1.11	13	1.8	2.0	1.7	0.83	3.6	1.5	0.41
C9. Bias attack	70	9.9	8.1	11.7	1.51	9.1	10.1	1.12	41	5.8	5.8	5.8	1.02	6.4	5.7	0.89
M. Caregiver victimization	254	36.0	31.4	40.4	1.48*	35.5	36.1	1.03	178	25.2	22.2	28.1	1.37	28.2	24.7	0.83
M1. Physical abuse	137	19.4	14.4	24.2	1.90*	22.7	18.8	0.79	79	11.2	9.5	12.8	1.40	13.6	10.7	0.76
M2. Psychological/emotional abuse	195	27.6	22.8	32.3	1.62*	23.6	28.4	1.28	115	16.3	13.8	18.6	1.43	17.3	16.1	0.92
M3. Neglect	49	6.9	5.8	8.1	1.44	8.2	6.7	0.81	32	4.5	3.5	5.6	1.65	4.5	4.5	1.00
M4. Custodial interference/family abduction	52	7.4	6.3	8.4	1.35	8.2	7.2	0.87	28	4.0	4.6	3.3	0.72	6.4	3.5	0.54
P. Peer and sibling victimization	353	50.0	53.0	47.1	0.79	48.2	50.3	1.09	244	34.6	37.8	31.5	0.76	34.5	34.6	1.00
P1. Gang or group assault	67	9.5	9.5	9.5	1.00	10.9	9.2	0.83	42	5.9	6.1	5.8	0.97	3.6	6.4	1.81
P2. Peer or sibling assault	172	24.4	23.1	25.6	1.15	26.4	24.0	0.88	94	13.3	13.8	12.8	0.92	15.5	12.9	0.81
P3. Nonsexual genital assault	113	16.0	20.2	12.0	0.54*	16.4	15.9	0.97	64	9.1	12.7	5.6	0.41*	10.0	8.9	0.88
P4. Physical intimidation	117	16.6	16.1	17.0	1.06	14.5	16.9	1.20	74	10.5	10.7	10.3	0.96	9.1	10.7	1.20
P5. Verbal/relational aggression	164	23.2	21.9	24.5	1.16	28.2	22.3	0.73	90	12.7	13.3	12.3	0.91	19.1	11.6	0.56*
P6. Dating violence	57	8.1	8.6	7.5	0.86	7.3	8.2	1.14	24	3.4	4.6	2.2	0.47	5.5	3.0	0.54
S. Sexual victimization	112	15.9	13.3	18.4	1.47	16.4	15.8	0.96	70	9.9	7.8	12.0	1.61	10.0	9.9	0.99
With physical contact	70	9.9	6.6	13.1	2.12*	9.1	10.1	1.12	37	5.2	2.6	7.8	3.18*	3.6	5.5	1.55
S1. Sexual abuse/assault by known adult	45	6.4	4.3	8.4	2.02*	6.4	6.4	1.00	12	1.7	0.6	2.8	4.93*	0.9	1.8	2.05
S2. Sexual abuse/assault by unknown adult	36	5.1	3.5	6.7	2.00	4.5	5.2	1.15	15	2.1	1.2	3.1	2.71	0.9	2.3	2.62
S3. Sexual abuse/assault by peer/sibling	37	5.2	3.7	6.7	1.84	5.5	5.2	0.95	8	1.1	0.6	1.7	2.93	0	1.3	–

(*Continued*)

Table 1. (Continued).

	Lifetime Victimization								Last year Victimization							
	Victimized		Gender (%)			Age (%)			Victimized		Gender (%)			Age (%)		
Victimization	*n*	%	M	F	*OR*	12–14	15–17	*OR*	*n*	%	M	F	*OR*	12–14	15–17	*OR*
S4. Forced sex (including attempts)	34	4.8	3.2	6.4	2.09*	5.5	4.7	0.85	19	2.7	2.0	3.3	1.68	2.7	2.7	0.98
Without physical contact	77	10.9	9.8	12.0	1.25	12.7	10.6	0.81	48	6.8	6.6	7.0	1.05	9.1	6.4	0.68
S5. Flashing/Sexual exposure	56	7.9	6.6	9.2	1.43	8.2	7.9	0.96	26	3.7	2.9	4.5	1.57	3.6	3.7	1.02
S6. Verbal sexual harassment	45	6.4	5.8	7.0	1.22	9.1	5.9	0.62	26	3.7	4.6	2.8	0.59	7.3	3.0	0.40*
W. Witnessing and indirect victimization	446	63.2	59.9	66.3	1.31	51.8	65.3	1.75*	319	45.2	40.6	49.6	1.44*	41.8	45.8	1.18
Family violence	163	23.1	18.4	27.6	1.68*	17.3	24.2	1.53	98	13.9	9.5	18.1	2.10*	14.5	13.8	0.94
W1. Witness to domestic violence	117	16.6	11.5	21.4	2.10*	14.5	16.9	1.20	67	9.5	5.5	13.4	2.66*	12.7	8.9	0.67
W2. Witness to parent assault to sibling	97	13.7	10.4	17.0	1.77*	10.9	14.3	1.36	57	8.1	5.8	10.3	1.88*	7.3	8.2	1.14
Community violence	386	54.7	55.3	62.1	1.32	49.1	60.6	0.86	296	41.9	37.8	46.0	1.40*	40.0	42.3	1.10
W3. Witness to assault with weapon	216	30.6	28.5	32.6	1.21	20.9	32.4	1.81*	134	19.0	18.2	19.8	1.11	19.1	19.0	0.99
W4. Witness to assault without weapon	239	33.9	32.6	35.1	1.12	24.5	35.6	1.70*	157	22.2	23.1	21.4	0.91	20.0	22.7	1.71
W5. Burglary of family household	156	22.1	17.9	26.2	1.63*	18.2	22.8	1.33	85	12.0	10.1	13.9	1.44	11.8	12.1	1.03
W6. Murder of family member or friend	107	15.2	11.0	19.2	1.94*	12.7	15.6	1.27	70	9.9	7.5	12.3	1.73*	9.1	10.1	1.12
W7. Witness to murder	84	11.9	10.4	13.4	1.33	8.2	12.6	1.62	44	6.2	6.1	6.4	1.06	9.1	5.7	0.61
W8. Exposure to random shootings, terrorism or riots	126	17.8	18.4	17.3	0.92	14.5	18.5	1.33	87	12.3	11.2	13.4	1.22	9.1	12.9	1.48
W9. Exposure to war or ethnic conflict	55	7.8	4.9	10.6	2.30*	5.5	8.2	1.55	33	4.7	2.9	6.4	2.31*	5.5	4.5	0.82
INT. Electronic victimization	146	20.7	17.6	23.7	1.46*	22.7	20.3	0.87	88	12.5	11.0	13.9	1.32	17.3	11.6	0.63
INT1. Harassment	104	14.7	11.5	17.8	1.67*	15.5	14.6	0.94	55	7.8	6.3	9.2	1.50	10.9	7.2	0.64
INT2. Sexual solicitations	78	11.0	9.2	12.8	1.45	10.0	11.2	1.14	45	6.4	6.1	6.7	1.11	9.1	5.9	0.62

Note: When prevalence was 0% or 100%, OR was not computed.

* The 95% confidence interval does not include the null value (OR = 1).

Caregiver victimization

More than one third of the sample (36%) reported some type of lifetime caregiver victimization, and a one quarter (25.2%) reported these experiences during the past year. The most frequent type of victimization was psychological/emotional abuse for both lifetime and the last year time frames (27.6% and 16.3%, respectively).

Although females tended to present higher rates for each form of caregiver victimization in both periods of time, females were only significantly more victimized than males (*OR* = 1.48, 95% CI [1.09, 2.02]) in the lifetime period, and also presented significantly higher levels of lifetime victimization for physical abuse (*OR* = 1.90, 95% CI [1.30, 2.80]) and psychological/emotional abuse (*OR* = 1.62, 95% CI [1.16, 2.26]). Older adolescents were more victimized than younger ones (36.1% and 35.5%, respectively) in the lifetime period, though the pattern was reversed for past year victimization (28.2% in the 12–14 year group vs. 24.7% in the 15–17 year group). However, no significant age differences were found with regard to any of the various caregiver victimization forms evaluated.

Peer and sibling victimization

Half of the adolescents (50.0%) had experienced some type of peer and sibling victimization in their lives and 34.6% over the past year. In both time frames, peer and sibling assault (24.4% for lifetime and 13.3% in the last year) and verbal/relational aggression (23.2% for lifetime and 12.7% for last year) were the most common forms of victimization. Males were more prone to being victims of almost any type of peer and sibling victimization, although nonsexual genital assault was the only item in which males were significant more victimized than females in the lifetime and last year periods (*OR* = 0.54, 95% CI [0.36, 0.81]; *OR* = 0.41, 95% CI [0.23, 0.71], respectively).

Additionally, although older adolescents reported more peer and sibling victimization during their lifetime (50.3% for older and 48.2% for younger adolescents), their past year victimization rates were almost the same (34.5% in young and 34.6% for older teenagers). With regard to specific types of victimization, younger children tended to present slightly higher levels of victimization than older ones. However, no statistical differences were found between age groups in the lifetime period, though younger children were more likely to experience verbal/relational aggression than older adolescents during the past year (*OR* = 0.56, 95% CI [0.32, 0.95]).

Sexual victimization

In all, 15.9% of the sample reported some form of sexual victimization at some point in their lives and 9.9% during the past year. The prevalence of sexual victimization with physical contact was slightly lower than the rate without

physical contact (9.9% and 10.9% in the lifetime period, and 5.2% and 6.8% during the past year). As regards lifetime sexual victimization, the most frequent type of victimization was sexual abuse/assault by a known adult (6.4%) for the subdomain with physical contact, and flashing/sexual exposure (7.9%) for the subdomain without physical contact. In the last year time frame, the most common were the two items without physical contact (3.7% in both flashing/sexual exposure and verbal sexual harassment), whereas forced sex (2.7%) was the highest for the physical contact subdomain.

Girls were more likely to report some form of sexual victimization in both time periods. Females experienced statistically more sexual victimization with physical contact (*OR* = 2.12, 95% CI [1.26, 3.58] for lifetime and *OR* = 3.18, 95% CI [1.48, 6.84] for past year experiences), sexual abuse/assault by a known adult (*OR* = 2.02, 95% CI [1.07, 3.82] for lifetime and *OR* = 4.93, 95% CI [1.08, 22.72] for last year experiences), and also forced sex at some point in their lifetime (*OR* = 2.09, 95% CI [1.00, 4.36]).

As regards the age group comparison, although the younger group tended to present slightly higher rates of sexual victimization in both time frames, when the presence of physical contact was considered the older children reported more victimization than younger ones over their lifetime (10.1% and 9.1%, respectively) and during the past year (5.5% and 3.6%, respec- tively). No significant age differences were found in any form of sexual victimization over the lifetime. For past year experiences, younger children were more likely to report verbal sexual harassment (*OR* = 0.40, 95% CI [0.17, 0.94]).

Witnessing violence and indirect victimization

Nearly two thirds (63.2%) of the sample had experienced some type of indirect victimization during their lives, and almost half reported these experiences in the last year (45.2%). Witnessing community violence was more frequent than being exposed to family violence (54.7% and 23.1%, respectively, for lifetime victimization and 41.9% and 13.9%, respectively, for the past year period), and the most common forms were witnessing

domestic violence (16.6% lifetime and 9.5% past year) for family violence, and witnessing assault without a weapon (33.9% lifetime and 22.2% past year) in community violence.

Females tended to report more victimization than males in both periods, but the difference was statistically significant only during the most recent year (*OR* = 1.44, 95% CI [1.07, 2.41]). Gender differences were found in the exposure to family violence subdomain (*OR* = 1.68, 95% CI [1.18, 2.41] lifetime and *OR* = 2.10, 95% CI [1.34, 3.29] for the past year), and also in the last year for exposure to community violence (*OR* = 1.40, 95% CI [1.04, 1.89]), and in several specific forms of victimization.

Regarding age differences, older adolescents were more likely than younger ones to report all forms of witnessing and indirect victimization over their lifetime (*OR* = 1.75, 95% CI [1.16, 2.63]), especially for exposure to community violence (*OR* = 1.59, 95% CI [1.06, 2.40]) and these age differences were

detected in witnessing assault with (*OR* = 1.81, 95% CI [1.11, 2.96]) and without (*OR* = 1.70, 95% CI [1.07, 2.70]) weapons. However, no age difference was found in the last year period.

Electronic victimization

Electronic victimization was reported by 20.7% of the children at some point in their lives and by 12.5% in the last year. The most frequent form was harassment (14.7% lifetime and 7.8% last year); girls always presented higher rates than boys, though differences were only found in lifetime rates for the electronic victimization domain (*OR* = 1.46, 95% CI [1.01, 2.10]) and harassment (*OR* = 1.67, 95% CI [1.09, 2.55]). Although younger adolescents tended to report more electronic victimization than older adolescents, no statistically significant age differences were found.

Poly-victimization

Table 2 displays information on poly-victimization in our sample of Chilean adolescents. Following the criterion for poly-victimization in the last year proposed by Finkelhor and colleagues (Finkelhor et al., 2005c), 37% of the current sample were classified as poly-victims, 21% presented between four and six different forms of victimization (low poly-victimiza- tion group), and 16% reported seven or more (high poly-victimization group). No age differences were found in the prevalence of victimization for the past year period (78.2% in younger children and 76.5% in older children). Among the victims, the mean total number types of victimiza- tion in the past year was around four, and no significant age differences were found (U = 19,136.50, p = .72).

Table 2. Victimization types and score thresholds according to age group.

	Lifetime (%)			Past Year (%)		
	12–14 (*n* = 110)	15–17 (*n* = 596)	Total (*n* = 706)	12–14 (*n* = 110)	15–17 (*n* = 596)	Total (*n* = 706)
No victimization	13.6	10.6	11.0	21.8	23.5	23.2
1–3 victimizations	n/a	n/a	n/a	39.1	39.9	39.8
4–6 victimizations	n/a	n/a	n/a	21.8	20.8	21.0
7 victimizations and over	n/a	n/a	n/a	17.3	15.8	16.0
Number of victims	95	533	628	86	456	542
Mean number of victimizations among victims (*SD*)	6.63 (7.40)	6.41 (6.55)	6.44 (6.68)	4.88 (4.61)	4.34 (3.61)	4.43 (3.79)
Child above mean	34.7	34.0	34.1	31.2	27.8	28.3
Number of victimization in the top 10th percentile	14+	12+	12+	11+	8+	8+
Child above top 10th percentile	10.0	10.1	10.5	10.0	11.4	11.9

Note: n/a: Not applicable for lifetime victimization. Categories are based on Finkelhor et al.'s (2005c) criterion for past year victimization.

Regarding lifetime victimization, no age differences were found in the prevalence of victimization (86.4% for the younger children and 89.4% for the older children). According to Finkelhor et al. (2009), the top 10% of the children who experienced the highest numbers of lifetime victi- mization in each age group was used as the cut-off point for lifetime poly-victimization. In accordance with other studies (e.g., Finkelhor et al., 2009), this categorical measure was constructed to represent children who could be defined as serious poly-victims because they experienced the highest numbers of cumulative victimization types. In this study, +14 victimizations for the 12–14 year age group and +12 victimizations for the 15–17 year age group were established as thresh- olds for lifetime poly-victimization. Using the same criterion for past year experiences, the threshold was set at +11 types of victimizations in the 12–14 year age group and at +8 types in the 15–17 year age group. The mean total of types of lifetime victimization among victims was around six, and no significant age differences were detected ($U = 26.445, p = .49$).

Table 3 shows the number of domains or JVQ victimization domains in which lifetime poly-victims (the top 10% of the adolescents with the highest number of lifetime victimization in each age group) and the remaining participants in the study presented at least one type of victimization throughout their lives. The pattern is similar between age groups, and the results show that, while the majority of non-poly- victims experienced victimization in fewer than three domains, all life- time poly-victims presented victimization in at least three domains and more than half in the six domains evaluated (54.4% for the 12–14 year group and 53.3% for the 15–17 year group).

Table 3. Number of modules of victimization according to lifetime poly-victimization status and age group.

	12–14 Years Old		15–17 Years Old	
Number of Modules[a]	Poly-Victims (n = 11) (%)[b]	Others (n = 99) (%)[b]	Poly-Victims (n = 60) (%)[b]	Others (n = 536) (%)[b]
No victimization	—	15.2	—	11.8
One module	0.0	26.3	0.0	18.7
Two modules	0.0	17.2	0.0	26.1
Three modules	0.0	21.2	5.0	21.5
Four modules	18.2	12.1	21.7	17.7
Five modules	27.3	6.1	20.0	3.9
Six modules	54.5	2.0	53.3	0.4

[a]Modules included are from the JVQ: Conventional crimes, victimization by caregivers, peer and sibling victimization, sexual victimization, witnessing and indirect victimization, and electronic victimization.
[b]Percentage of participants who have experienced victimization in that number of modules.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to expand the findings on child and adolescent victimization in northern Chile through the analysis of its occur- rence and its relationship to gender and age. Latin American countries have been previously described as highly violent (Garmendia-Lorena, 2011), and several studies of child and youth victimization have highlighted experiences of violence at the school and within the family in Chile. However, following the line of research initiated by Finkelhor et al. (2005a), no comprehensive assessment of multiple types of victimization and poly-victimization has been conducted in the general population to date.

In this context, we obtained a rate of lifetime victimization (89%) that was slightly higher than those recorded in most of the studies conducted with the same instrument in community samples from Europe (e.g., 84.1% in Sweden, Aho et al., 2014; 83% in Spain, Pereda et al., 2014; 83.7% in the UK, Radford et al., 2013), and North America (e.g., 79–87% in Canada, Cyr et al., 2013; 79.6% in the United States, Finkelhor et al., 2009). On the other hand, the results for past year prevalence were higher in Chilean adolescents when compared to Europe (e.g., 63.6% in Sweden, Aho et al., 2014; 64.6% in Finland, Ellonen & Salmi, 2011; 69% in Spain, Pereda et al., 2014; 57.1% in the United Kingdom, Radford et al., 2013) and North America (e.g., 59–66% in Canada, Cyr et al., 2013; 69.3% in the United States, Finkelhor et al., 2009).

Patterns of victimization in Chilean adolescents

Focusing on specific forms of victimization, we see that the pattern is similar to previous studies. The most prevalent types over the lifetime are conventional crimes (70.3%) and witnessing and indirect victimization (63.2%), mainly community violence (54.7%), with no differences between boys and girls. These rates, however, are higher than those obtained in other samples from different cultural contexts (Aho et al., 2014; Cyr et al., 2013; Dong et al., 2013; Pereda et al., 2014) and show the high prevalence of exposure to violence with which Chilean adolescents have to cope over their lifetime.

Sexual victimization was again (see, e.g., Pereda et al., 2014) the least prevalent type, but the rate was twice that found in most previous interna- tional studies. In addition, the prevalence was higher than in other studies with Chilean adolescents (Ysern De Arce & Becerra-Aguayo, 2006). This difference in prevalence is probably due to methodological issues. Previous studies in Chile have used instruments to assess sexual abuse limited only to physical contact behaviors and have not included other non-contact victimi- zations such as exhibitionism. It should be noted that the rate of sexual victimization was similar for boys and girls, as reported in Chinese adoles- cents (Dong et al., 2013), but not in the results obtained in Western cultures

where girls tended to report this type of victimization more (Aho et al., 2014; Cyr et al., 2013; Pereda et al., 2014). Similarly, retrospective studies conducted in Chile have also shown a very high prevalence of sexual victimization in males, ranging from 9.4% before the age of 14 years to 20.9% from 14 to 30 years old (Lehrer et al., 2013).

The rate of caregiver victimization is also very high when compared to Canada (13%, Cyr et al., 2013) or China (14.3%, Dong et al., 2013). However, though still higher, it is similar to the rate obtained in Spain (25.3%, Pereda et al., 2014). We should bear in mind that Chile and Spain share some traditional child-rearing values, and the wide acceptance of physical punish- ment is probably one of them. Studies have shown that there are no differ- ences between Spanish and Chilean parents in the use of physical aggression (Orpinas, 1999). Thus, research has shown that corporal punishment is a commonly accepted and widely used means of punishing undesirable behaviors among children in Chilean families (Ma, Han, Grogan-Kaylor, Delva, & Castillo, 2012).

Age and gender differences

In contrast to the theoretical suppositions and the findings of previous studies (Cyr et al., 2013; Finkelhor et al., 2009; Pereda et al., 2014), younger Chilean adolescents reported more victimization than the older ones. Significant differences were found for lifetime attempted assault, verbal/relational aggressions, and verbal sexual harassment in the last year, but the percentages obtained in younger adolescents were higher in almost every item assessed. These surprising results could be due to a higher increase in violent behavior in northern Chile; this would be at odds with the official reports of a decrease in violence in the country (Ministerio del Interior y Seguridad Pública, 2013), although empirical studies have shown increases in illicit drug trafficking, violence, and gang involvement among youth (Fries, Grogan-Kaylor, Bares, Han, & Delva, 2013). But it may also be due to higher reporting rates of these experiences by younger adolescents due to the mass prevention of violence campaigns that have been conducted around the country in recent years (see "It's not your fault" by the National Service for the Protection of Children (SENAME) or UNICEF's 2014 campaign against violence "The belt and the shoe").

Regarding sex differences, females tend to face more violent experiences over their lifetime in every domain analyzed. Girls reported more attempted assaults related to conventional crimes, but also more physical and psychological/emotional abuse by caregivers, sexual abuse/assault by a known adult, forced sex, witnessing domestic violence, witnessing parent assault of a sibling, burglary of family household, murder of family member or friend, exposure to war or ethnic conflict, and electronic harassment. These results differ from those obtained in other countries, where even when women

report a higher prevalence regarding sexual victimization (Aho et al., 2014; Cyr et al., 2013; Pereda et al., 2014), caregiver victimization and witnessing family violence (Aho et al., 2014; Cyr et al., 2013; Dong et al., 2013; Pereda et al., 2014) such a wide-ranging pattern of violence is not observed. The high risk of violence for women in Latin America has been reported in previous studies (see, e.g., the theoretical review by Wilson, 2014), and appears to be related to the cultural values of *machismo* and traditional sex roles (Heise, Raikes, Watts, & Zwi, 1994) that seem to persist today.

Poly-victimization

More than one third of the sample reported multiple victimizations in the past year, a higher proportion than that described in other studies with adolescents from the United States (18–22%, Finkelhor et al., 2005b, 2007, 2009), and Canada (8%, Cyr et al., 2013). Although the whole sample threshold (+12 types of victimization) for lifetime poly-victimization was similar to those used by Radford et al. (2013) in the United Kingdom and Turner, Finkelhor, and Ormrod (2010) in the United States (+12 and +11, respectively), it was much higher than those used by Pereda et al. (2014) in Spain and Cyr et al. (2013) in Canada (+8 and +9 types of victimization, respectively).

In addition, more than half of the poly-victims reported experiencing victimization in all the domains assessed. This finding indicates that violence is widespread in the lives of these young people and may disrupt the way they relate to others; as previous research has shown, poly-victimization increases the risk of mental health problems and criminal behavior (Ford, Elhai, Connor, & Frueh, 2010), and also revictimization (Cuevas, Finkelhor, Clifford, Ormrod, & Turner, 2010). Finkelhor (2007) describes victimization more as a life condition than a specific situation for these adolescents, and our results suggest that this statement is borne out in Chilean youth.

Limitations

The present study has several limitations. First, the research was based on a sample of adolescents from a specific geographic area in the north of Chile, and is not representative of the entire Chilean context. In addition, the study focused only on analyzing age and gender differences in order to compare the results obtained with those of previous studies (Cyr et al., 2013; Finkelhor et al., 2009; Pereda et al., 2014), and some of the contrast analysis performed could imply an increase of type 1 error or false positives. The sample was not large enough to allow for comparisons between ethnic groups, although an analysis of this kind would be particularly interesting given the presence in the country of different indigenous groups (e.g., Aymara, Mapuche, Rapanui), with their own cultural values and perspectives on violence. Finally, the age cohort of

15 to 17 years is over-represented in the sample, and this could be a confounding variable that should be considered when analyzing age differences.

Practical implications

In recent years, considerable efforts have been made to raise awareness about violence against children in Latin America as a whole, and in Chile in particular. The results obtained in this study will be useful for guiding policies aimed at preventing victimization and for the design of interventions for victims, bearing in mind that these policies should consider a comprehensive view of the experiences suffered by children and adolescents. Given the high rates of polyvictimization reported here and the multiple domains in which it occurs, an assessment that considers a wide range of victimization experiences is essential in order to detect the most victimized cases and to offer them the resources they need in order to cope. Otherwise, there is a high risk that these adolescents will develop aggressive behavior and externalizing symptoms, as has been found in other studies with Chilean samples (Guerra et al., 2016).

The results show that the community context in which Chilean adolescents grow up and relate to others is extremely violent when compared to developed countries. Studies have confirmed the negative consequences that exposure to community and family violence can have on children's development and its relationship with the repetition of patterns of violence when they become adults (Margolin & Gordis, 2000). Although Chile has lower rates of violence than other countries in Latin America (Orpinas, 1999), its level of community violence is excessively high and is a risk factor for the perpetuation of the use of violence by the next generations (Fries et al., 2013). Our research also indicates the importance of keeping violence against girls and women on the political agenda. Violence against women is a public health problem that is of concern to all. Even though the Chilean Ministry for Women (SERNAMEG) has designed national plans of action to address violence against women and children, a large gap seems to remain between the commitment and the implementation.

The high prevalence of sexual victimization found in the study when compared to developed countries, especially in males, needs to be analyzed in depth. Previous studies conducted in Chile with different methodologies have obtained similar results (e.g., Lehrer et al., 2009). However, even though the rates of sexual victimization between males and females are similar, their experiences of sexual abuse tend to be different (see, e.g., the study of Frías & Erviti, 2014), and these differences seem to be related to traditional gender attitudes and models that are not analyzed in this study. Overall, our results underscore the importance of directing additional public health attention to experiences of sexual abuse in Chile, in adolescent boys as well (Lehrer et al., 2013).

Conclusions

A great deal of research is still needed to understand child and adolescent victimization in developing countries. Few studies have been published in Latin America that analyze the victimization of children and adolescents from a comprehensive perspective, using an instrument that allows cross- cultural comparisons. To our knowledge, the present study is the first one to do so, and it will contribute to advancing this line of study not just in Chile but elsewhere in the continent. The results obtained show that a significant percentage of Chilean youths are affected by victimization. The high levels of violence that children and adolescents in this region have to face represent a serious social and public health problem. This is especially true in the case of female adolescents, despite the efforts of national prevention campaigns. Practitioners should develop a comprehensive view of this problem so as to tailor effective prevention and intervention programs and help poly-victi- mized adolescents recover from the sequelae of these multiple forms of violence. Intervention with poly-victims in Chile is essential in order to reduce the risk of a future in which violence is repeated generation after generation.

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