Relations between restorative parental discipline, family climate, parental support, empathy, shame, and defenders in bullying

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the associations among restorative parental discipline, family climate, parental support, moral emotions (empathy and shame), and the role of defenders in bullying. In total, 1224 adolescents were randomly selected \((p = .5, q = 95\%); 54.1\% were female, and 45.9\% males. The age of research participants ranged between 11 and 15 years old \((M = 13.5, SD = 1.02)). A model of structural equations was calculated. The results found restorative parental discipline, family climate, and parental support were directly and indirectly related to empathy, shame, and the adoption of defender role in bullying. A multi-group analyses indicated that gender did not moderate the developed model for restorative discipline but did have interesting results. Findings suggest that positive parenting is important to stimulate moral emotions and the defenders' role.

1. Introduction

The literature suggests about 15%–30% of Mexican adolescent students have participated in a bullying event, playing either the aggressor or victim role (National Institute of Statistic and Geography [INEGI, for its Spanish acronym], 2015; Organization for Cooperation and Economic Development [OECD], 2017). According to Volk, Dane, and Marini (2014), bullying is an intentional aggressive behavior repeatedly performed within an unequal power relationship that involves aggressors, victims, and bystanders. Although bullying may be related with numerous factors, it seems that emotional and psychological problems are strongly associated with this behavior (Lambe, Hudson, Craig, & Pepler, 2017; Werth, Nickerson, Aloe, & Swearer, 2015).

During the last decades, scholars have unsuccessfully strived to elucidate the factors that may lessen and prevent bullying events. While aggressor and victim roles have received considerable attention, bystanders, the individuals who witness the aggressions, are understudied. In this regard, recent studies suggest bystanders may play a significant role in bullying (Denny et al., 2015; Polanin, Espegale, & Pigott, 2012; Pronk, Olthof, & Goossens, 2015; Saarento, Boulton, & Salmivalli, 2015). For some scholars (Demaray, Summers, Jenkins, & Becker, 2016; Pouwels, Lansu, & Cillessen, 2017) the complexity of bystanders is explained by the variety of different roles that may be adopted (assistant, encouraging, defender, and non-involved). Whereas the defender is the only one that has the potential to stop and lessen bullying events, our interest is understanding the factors that lead bystanders to adopt a defender. It is expected this knowledge, may contribute to add significant knowledge aimed to lessen and prevent bullying events.

The role of bystander, as with any complex behavior, can be explained through a variety of yet to be explored variables (Lambe et al., 2018). Most previous research on defenders has focused on analysis of individual characteristics (Datta, Cornell, & Huang, 2016; Jenkins, Demaray, Fredrick, & Summers, 2016); peer relations (Gini, Pozzoli, & Bussey, 2014; van der Ploeg, Kretschmer, Salmivalli, & Veenstra, 2017); and school context (Jungert, Pirotti, & Thornberg, 2016; Stover, Casey, & Herrenkohl, 2017). However, very little is yet known about other factors leading witnesses to adopt a defender role. In this regard, emerging studies (Lambe et al., 2017; Machackova & Pfetsch, 2016; Werth et al., 2015) suggest moral emotions have the potential to be behavioral drivers. Therefore, it is essential to understand where these emotions come from.

For some scholars, family constitutes a fundamental context for moral emotional development and the role adopted by bystanders (Ngai, Xie, Ng, & Ngai, 2018; Padilla-Walker, Carlos, Christensen, & Vorgason, 2012). Unsurprisingly, individual moral development and

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the role adopted by bystanders are increasingly associated with the socialization process within the family and the individual's family characteristics (Casey, Lindhorst, & Storer, 2017; Machackova & Pfetsch, 2016; Pozzoli & Gini, 2013; van der Ploeg et al., 2017). As a result, a growing number of scholars (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006; Carlo, Knight, McGinley, & Hayes, 2011; Padilla-Walker, Fraser, & Harper, 2012) assert that family, specifically with positive parenting, are behavioral drivers that lead adolescents to adopt a defender role in bullying. Therefore, positive parenting strategies have drawn the attention of bullying researchers.

The exploration of the effects of parenting is particularly important for countries like Mexico, where family constitutes the most influential behavioral driver (Díaz-Loving, Saldívar, Armenta-Hurtarte, Reyes, & Moreno, 2017; Gonzalez, Pitts, Hill, & Roosa, 2000). Traditionally, Mexican family values promote respect, cooperation, and reciprocity (Gonzalez et al., 2000). Thus, exploring the ways family promotes prosocial behavior in adolescents is imperative (Criss, Smith, Morris, Liu, & Hubbard, 2017; Fan & Chen, 2012). This is particularly applicable to the Mexican context, where positive parenting has already proven to be effective in protecting adolescents of violence exposure in several Mexican communities (INEGI, 2017; Institute for Economic & Peace, 2018).

Despite evidence that positive parenting constitutes a fundamental condition for moral emotional development (Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Knafo-Noam, 2015; Ngai et al., 2018; Padilla-Walker, Carlos, et al., 2012), the literature scarcely explores its impact on the defender role. In fact, past and emerging studies have limited their scope to exploring parental support (Lambe et al., 2018; Li, Chen, Chen, & Wu, 2015), attachment (Nickerson, Mele, & Princiotta, 2008), and parental expectations (Pozzoli & Gini, 2013). No studies known by the authors have explored the effects of positive parental discipline strategies on the behavior of bystanders in bullying events among Mexican adolescents.

While the research is currently scarce, the literature does give reason to suspect that the role adopted by bystanders in bullying may be associated with family-related variables, specifically, with the kind of parenting exerted at home. The authors posit that family is the most influential institution shaping human behavior through a pervasive socialization process that provides not only guidance but also safety within a proper context. Therefore, both the parent-driver model (where the direction of effects goes from the parent to the adolescent) and the restorative justice concept were adopted as the framework to explore the effect of positive parenting on the defender bystander role in bullying.

1.1. Family and defender role

In society, adolescents are surrounded by many influential models (teachers, peers, friends, adults), but family remains essential to adolescent development (Dunn, 2014; Grusец & Davidov, 2007). However, family functions are not limited to mere socialization of their members, it also protects members and provides guidance ( Patterson, 2002). The family provides guidance through a punitive or positive parenting. Whereas punitive parenting comprises punishment and child stigmatization, positive parenting stresses mutual respect. Although both parenting techniques provide learning that lasts a lifetime, positive parenting focuses on learning for the future instead of punishing for the past.

Positive parenting includes inductive discipline practices, a positive family climate, and support (Davis & Carlo, 2018; Pastorelli et al., 2016; Waller et al., 2015). In terms of bullying, adopting an inductive discipline implies reasoning with adolescents about the consequences of transgression for the victim (Patrick & Gibbs, 2012). One method is restorative discipline, which encourages adolescents to recognize the negative effects of aggression, and to repair the harm inflicted on the victims, without stigmatization (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006; Harris, 2001). As a result, some research has found positive parenting to be a beneficial frame when exploring discipline in bullying events (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2012; Morrison, 2006).

Restorative discipline may be related to the adoption of the defender role in multiple ways. This discipline promotes accountability for bullies, whereas it also fosters reflection about their emotions and compassion for others’ emotions as well (Duggins, Kuperminc, Henrich, Smalls-Glover, & Perilla, 2016; Lambe et al., 2018; Li et al., 2015; Vieira Jr., 2015). Parents exerting this discipline exhibit moral emotions such as concern (i.e., empathy), caring, and comforting behaviors that are frequently emulated by children (Grusęc & Goodnow, 1994; Lai, Siu, & Shek, 2015). Further, parents express disappointment without stigmatizing; on the contrary, adolescents are reminded they can do better in terms of moral behavior (Patrick & Gibbs, 2012).

Predictably, parents adopting this discipline allow children to perceive a positive family climate and parental support. These conditions lead adolescents to both accept family goals (Carvalho, Fernandes, & Relva, 2018; Hastings, Miller, & Troxel, 2015), and to internalize parental values associated with respect and care of others (Grusęc & Goodnow, 1994; Hoffman, 2000; Pastorelli et al., 2016). These reasons make restorative discipline an attractive strategy for scholars (Carlo, McGinley, Hayes, & Martinez, 2012; Pastorelli et al., 2016) studying the factors that lead to pro-social behaviors, such as taking a defender role in this case.

1.2. Moral emotions

Morality belongs to the set of emotions that regulate social relationships in society (Smetsena, 1999). According to some scholars (Hair, 2003; Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007), moral behavior derives from individuals’ self-assessment of personal behavior in relation to moral norms. Nonetheless, moral judgments are not enough to promote moral behavior (Carlo, Mestre, Samper, Tur, & Armenta, 2010; Colasante, Zuffané, & Malti, 2015). For example, even though adolescents consider bullying immoral due to the damage it causes their peers (Pouwels et al., 2017; Thornberg, 2010), this acknowledgement does ensure moral behavior (Bandura, 1999; Gibbs, 2014). However, researchers have found that additional moral emotions such as empathy (Hair, 2003; Paciello, Fida, Corniglia, Tramontano, & Cole, 2013) and shame (Eisenberg, 2000; Gilligan, 2001; Harris, 2003) are often required to prevent an immoral behavior (Eisenberg, 2000; Malti & Ongley, 2014).

Empathy. This emotional response is derived from recognizing and sharing an emotional state and perspective of others (Eisenberg, Eggum, & Giunta, 2010; Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006). It has both cognitive and affective dimensions (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987; Yeo, Ang, Loh, Fu, & Karre, 2011). In the context of bullying, empathy has been connected to a greater involvement in the defending role (Barchia & Bussey, 2011; Pöyhönen & Salmivalli, 2008; Thornberg, Pozzoli, & Jungert, 2015).

Shame. This emotion is manifested when individuals gain awareness about the negative perceptions from others with respect to their own misbehavior (Harris, 2001). Therefore, the effects of shame depend on how individuals manage their own emotions to others’ judgements. A number of studies have linked this emotion to moral behavior (Eisenberg, 2000; Gilligan, 2001; Harris, 2003; Spruit, Schalkwijk, van Vugt, & Stams, 2016; Velotti, Ellison, & Garofalo, 2014).

Restorative theory posits that the alignment between shame and pro-social behavior depends on how individuals respond to this emotion (Braithwaite, 1989; Harris, 2001). Moreover, a restorative management of shame implies recognizing that aggressive behavior is flawed, but also implies repairing the harm inflicted on the victim (Pontzer, 2010; Tofii & Farrington, 2008). This condition explains why restorative strategies are increasingly associated with the adoption of pro-social behaviors in adolescents (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006; Menesini & Camodeca, 2008; Morrison, 2006; Othof, 2012; Valdés-Cuervo & Carlos-Martínez, 2017).
1.3. The present study

Despite previous analyses of family relationship effects on moral emotion development and taking a defender role in bullying (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006; Arsenio & Ramos-Marcuse, 2014; Carlo, McGinley, Hayes, Batenhorst, & Wilkinson, 2007; Patrick & Gibbs, 2012; Yoo, Feng, & Day, 2013), these previous studies were limited by four broad reasons. First, they focused on a reduced set of family-related variables (e.g., Li et al., 2015; Nickerson et al., 2008; Pozzoli & Gini, 2013), which did not include parental inductive discipline. Second, they have focused on the direct associations between family-related variables and the defender role, which may obscure more indirect associations between family-related variables and the defender role. Third, despite the large evidence suggesting males and females differ in perceptions of parental discipline (Gryczkowski, Jordan, & Mercer, 2010; Raufelder, Hofrichter, Ringeisen, Regner, & Jacke, 2015), current literature has failed to explore the effects of gender in the association between family and the defender role. And fourth, no research known to the authors has been conducted in Mexico that explores the effects of moral emotions and defender role on discipline in adolescents (see Fig. 1). Moreover, the role of gender in these relations is also examined. Finally, an alternative model was used to explore the directional effects of moral emotions and defender role on discipline in restorative practices. These decisions were inspired by the inconsistencies reported by previous scholars who suggested mono and bi-directional effects within family socialization processes. Specifically, some studies supported a bi-directional model (Belsky, 1984; Pastorelli et al., 2016; Taraban & Shaw, 2018), whereas others (Dekovié, Reitz, Asscher, & Prinzie, 2008; Heinonen, Raikkonen, Keskiivaara, & Keltikangas-Jarviven, 2002) reported only a parent-to-adolescent effect. The authors believe there is a positive association between restorative parental discipline, family environment, parental support, and the defender role. Moreover, these variables were anticipated to be related to the role of defender through empathy and restorative management of shame. Finally, gender was expected to have an effect on the relationships proposed in the model.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

We randomly selected 64 public secondary schools in the state of Sonora, Mexico. In total, 1224 adolescents were randomly selected (p = .5, q = 95%), 54.1% were female, and 45.9% male. Research participants were aged between 11 and 15 years old (M = 13.5, SD = 1.02). At the time of the study, 41.6% of the participants attended the seventh grade of secondary education, 29.9% eighth grade, and the remaining 28.5% were in ninth grade. All participant students attended public education institutions. Although most public secondary education schools in Mexico educate students from all social classes (lowest, middle, and upper), social status was not a controlled variable.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Restorative parental discipline

The Scale of Restorative Parental Discipline (PPDR [for its Spanish acronym], Valdés-Cuervo & Carlos-Martínez, 2017) was used. This scale consists of 12 Likert-type items (0 = never, 4 = always), which measure parental practices of restorative discipline from the adolescents’ perspective. The scale consists of three sub-constructs: error acknowledgment (e.g., my parents talk to me, so I can understand the damage my aggressive behavior may cause, α = 0.78; Ω = 0.81), damage repair (e.g., my parents make me apologise to my partner for my aggressive behavior, α = 0.75; Ω = 0.77), and no stigmatization (e.g., my parents believe that I can behave correctly, α = 0.80; Ω = 0.82). The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) showed adequate fit of the measurement model to the data (X² = 60.15, df = 41, p = .027; AGFI = 0.96; CFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.03, IC 90 [0.02–0.05]).

2.2.2. Family climate

The subscales of cohesion and expressiveness from the Family Functioning Scale (FFS; Bloom, 1985) were used. The cohesion subscale consists of five Likert-type items (0 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree) that assess union, agreement, and commitment among family members (e.g., there are feelings of union in our family, α = 0.82; Ω = 0.85). The subscale of expressiveness consists of five items that measure the degree of tolerance and importance given in the family to the sharing of ideas and feelings (e.g., my family members feel free to say what they think, α = 0.85; Ω = 0.87). The CFA results show the model is appropriate (X² = 43.5, df = 33, p = .105; SRMR = 0.04; CFI = 0.99; AGFI = 0.97; RMSEA = 0.04, IC 90 [0.03–0.05]).

2.2.3. Parental support

The parental support subconstruct from the Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale was used (CASSS; Malecki & Demaray, 2002).

Fig. 1. Theoretical Model of the Relations between Restorative Parental Discipline, Family Climate Parental Support, Empathy, Restorative Management of Shame and Defender Role.
Table 1
Means, standard deviations, correlations, and mean comparisons between groups of men and women in study variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. DRP</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. CF</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.53***</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. AP</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.49***</td>
<td>0.47***</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.43***</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. EP</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.38***</td>
<td>0.30***</td>
<td>0.27***</td>
<td>0.42***</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. MRV</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>0.54***</td>
<td>0.27***</td>
<td>0.42***</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.41***</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. RD</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.38***</td>
<td>0.24***</td>
<td>0.33***</td>
<td>0.36***</td>
<td>0.36***</td>
<td>0.31***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/SD Male</td>
<td>2.49/1.02</td>
<td>2.83/1.24</td>
<td>2.47/1.29</td>
<td>1.69/1.11</td>
<td>1.93/1.29</td>
<td>1.04/0.53</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.64/1.31</td>
<td>3.07/1.08</td>
<td>2.95/1.10</td>
<td>2.26/1.07</td>
<td>2.29/1.35</td>
<td>1.30/0.61</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohen’s d</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. DRP = Restorative Parental Discipline; CF = Family Climate; AP = Parental Support; EP = Empathy; MRV = Restorative management of shame; RD = Defender.

⁎ p < .05.
*** p < .01.
**** p < .001.

1 = almost never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = almost always, and 4 = always. It measures adolescent perceptions of emotional and instrumental aids they get from parents (e.g., my parents help me to make decisions, they get from parents (e.g., measures adolescent perceptions of emotional and instrumental aids they get from parents (e.g., my parents help me to make decisions)). The CFA shows the model of measurement fits the data (X^2 = 15.6, df = 7, p = .03; SRMR = 0.02; CFI = 0.99; AGFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.05, IC 90 [0.01–0.08]).

2.2.4. Shame acknowledgment

The subscale from the Restorative Management of Shame for Mexican Adolescents Questionnaire was adapted for the study (MOSS-SAST; Ahmed, 1999; Valdés-Cuero, Carlos-Martínez, Wendlandt-Ameza, & Ramirez-Zaragoza, 2016). The scale consists of six scenarios that illustrate student bystander situations of aggression as witnessed by an adult (e.g., imagine you observe a student hit another student as they walk through the school. A teacher observes this situation). The student is asked to imagine how he or she would respond if he/she were in these scenarios.

In each situation, five responses are described (e.g., I feel embarrassed by what happened). It was answered with a Likert scale (0 = never, 1 = almost never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = almost always and 4 = always). The CFA shows a good fit of the model to the data (X^2 = 12.83, df = 2, p = .002; SRMR = 0.02; CFI = 0.99; AGFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.04, IC 90 [0.02–0.07]). The reliability of the scores was adequate (α = 0.90, Ω = 91).

2.2.5. Empathy

The affective empathy subscale from the Empathy and Compassion in Adolescents Questionnaire (AMES; Vossen, Piotrowski, & Valkenburg, 2015) was used. This subscale consists of four items with five response options (0 = never, 4 = always) that measure the adolescent’s ability to experience peer emotions (e.g., when a friend is sad I get sad too). The CFA results show a good fit of the model to the data (X^2 = 1.67, df = 2, p = .432; SRMR = 0.02, CFI = 0.99; AGFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.05, IC 90 [0.02–0.08]). The scale reliability was acceptable (α = 0.74, Ω = 77).

2.2.6. Defender Bystander

This subscale of the defender role was taken from the Participant Role Approach questionnaire (Sutton & Smith, 1999). This version consists of four Likert-type items (0 = never, 4 = always) that evaluate the frequency of adolescents’ involvement in behaviors aimed at protecting victims of bullying (e.g., when a classmate is physically assaulted I inform the adults). The CFA results show a good fit of the model to the data (X^2 = 3.48, df = 2, p = .175; CFI = 0.99; AGFI = 0.97; SRMR = 0.04; RMSEA = 0.05, IC 90 [0.02–0.07]). The reliability of the scores was acceptable (α = 0.80, Ω = 83).

2.3. Procedure

First, the researchers gained ethical permission to conduct the study from the Research Commission of Technological Institute of Sonora. Then, several school administrators and teachers were sought in order to gather voluntary participants. Later, a consent letter was sent to adolescents’ parents to both explain the purpose of the study and ask permission for students’ participation. Only 5% of parents refused to allow their children to participate in the study. Then, the purpose of the study was explained to students, along with confirming their voluntary participation, and the confidentiality of the information collected. During this stage, participants were informed they may leave the study at their convenience at any time during the data collection process.

2.4. Statistical analysis

The percentage of lost data was 2% in the sample. In all cases, the lost items were treated using the regression imputation method. A structural equation model was calculated with the AMOS software. We used the maximum likelihood estimation (ML) with bootstrap (with 2000 replicates and a 95% confidence interval) to determine the goodness of fit of the model. For the comparison of alternative models, the AIC (Akaike Information Criterion) and BIC (Bayesian information criterion) was used. Indirect effects were calculated using the AMOS bootstrap method with a 95% confidence interval (Cheon & MacKinnon, 2012). Finally, a multi-group analysis was performed to determine differences in the gender-based measurement model. The measurement and structural invariance of the model between males and females were verified, using indicators of invariance ΔX^2 with p > .001, and ΔCFI lesser than 0.01 (Kline, 2016; Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2013).

3. Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations between the study variables. The results show a significant positive correlation between restorative discipline, family climate, parental support, empathy, restorative management of shame and defender role. The differences in these variables according to gender were also tested (Student’s t and Cohen’s d). Females scored higher than males on all variables analyzed (see Table 1). The effects sizes are small however, except for empathy, suggesting little practical value of the gender differences.

3.1. Structural model

The results of the structural equation model and the statistically...
3.2. Alternative models

The calculated structural model obtained acceptable fit rates ($X^2 = 56.46, df = 48, p = .19$; SRMR = 0.04; AGFI = 0.99; CFI = 0.99; TLI = 0.99; RMSEA = 0.02; IC 90 [0.01–0.05]); AIC = 230.56; BIC = 346.71), and explained 41% of variance scores for the defender role.

Regarding the direct effects, the results indicate that restorative parental discipline is positively associated with the family climate ($\beta = 0.54, p < .001$), parental support ($\beta = 0.47, p < .001$), empathy ($\beta = 0.35, p < .001$), restorative management of shame ($\beta = 0.37, p < .001$), and the defender role ($\beta = 0.38, p < .001$). In addition, family climate and parental support are positively related to empathy ($\beta = 0.27, p < .001$; $\beta = 0.37, p < .001$, respectively), restorative management of shame ($\beta = 0.23, p < .000$; $\beta = 0.40, p < .000$, respectively) and the role of defender ($\beta = 0.20, p < .001$; $\beta = 0.27, p < .001$, respectively). Likewise, empathy and shame are positively related to the conduct of defender roles ($\beta = 0.43, p < .001$; $\beta = 0.34, p < .000$, respectively).

Regarding indirect effects, results indicate that restorative discipline ($\beta = 0.16, IC [0.12–0.17], p = .001$), family climate ($\beta = 0.15, IC [0.11–0.15], p = .001$) and parental support ($\beta = 0.18, IC [0.12–0.17], p = .001$) favors the role of defender through positive effects on empathy and shame.

3.3. Multi-group analysis by gender

Finally, in order to compare the effects of gender on the measurements between the variables of the model, a multigroup analysis was performed. The indices obtained indicate the existence of configuration invariance ($X^2 = 163.13, df = 120, p = .005$; SRMR = 0.05; AGFI = 0.97; CFI = 0.99; TLI = 0.99; RMSEA = 0.02; IC [0.01–0.03]). Both chi-squared tests ($\Delta X^2$) and differences between comparative goodness-of-fit indexes (ACFI) corroborated that the proposed connections in the model are similar in both genders (see Table 2).

4. Discussion

In this study, the effects of positive parenting that may lead Mexican adolescents to adopt a prosocial behavior (defender role) in bullying were explored. Most previous research has focused on the effects of parental socialization and the association between parental traits, adolescents’ personal characteristics, and adolescents’ undesirable behaviors (e.g., bullying, academic failure). However, studies exploring the effects of positive parenting promoting defender roles are scarce. As a result, the factors leading bystanders to adopt defender roles in bullying have remained unclear. Understanding these factors is crucial, as the literature suggests the adoption of a defender role might contribute to both lessen bullying events and to relieve the lifelong effects on the victims. This study hypothesized that the adoption of a defender role is related to positive parenting. Therefore, restorative parental discipline, positive family climate, and supporting adolescents were anticipated to promote emotions such as shame and empathy, which would also encourage a defender role in bullying.

This study analyzed family-related variables that may lead adolescents to develop moral emotions (empathy, shame), and consequently to adopt a defender role in bullying. The parent-driver socialization model and restorative justice theory were used as a framework to lead this study. This was a suitable framework to analyze the positive effects of positive parenting promoting defender roles are scarce. As a result, the factors leading bystanders to adopt defender roles in bullying have remained unclear. Understanding these factors is crucial, as the literature suggests the adoption of a defender role might contribute to both lessen bullying events and to relieve the lifelong effects on the victims. This study hypothesized that the adoption of a defender role is related to positive parenting. Therefore, restorative parental discipline, positive family climate, and supporting adolescents were anticipated to promote emotions such as shame and empathy, which would also encourage a defender role in bullying.

Table 2 Results of the invariance analysis by gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invariance</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$\Delta\chi^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta$df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>$\Delta$CFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Configurational</td>
<td>163.31</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metrics</td>
<td>168.37</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.887</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>182.21</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>13.84</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural weight</td>
<td>188.6</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>25.29</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.283</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>194.72</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>12.51</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.640</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of positive parenting, for two main reasons. First, it allowed an in-depth understanding of the relationship between family-related variables, moral emotions, and the defender role. Second, it confirmed the direct and indirect effects proposed in the model of structural equations. The findings suggest that the combination of restorative discipline, positive family climate, and parental support lead adolescents to develop moral emotions (empathy, shame), which makes them more likely to adopt a defender role. Earlier empirical work (Kissner, Dishion, Poulin, & Pastore, 2009; Laird, Pettit, Dodge, & Bates, 2003) is consistent with these findings, as they suggest the quality of family relationships (positive climate and parental support) is a mediating variable on the association between parental discipline and prosocial behavior. Furthermore, unlike some studies (Carlo et al., 2007; Yoo et al., 2013), these findings are consistent with much other previous research (Duggins et al., 2016; Lambe et al., 2018; Morris et al., 2007; Ngai et al., 2018; Padilla-Walker, Carlos, et al., 2012; Pastorelli et al., 2016; Waller et al., 2015) regarding direct effects of positive parental discipline on the quality of family relations, moral emotions, and defender roles.

Although parental discipline practices are not related to altruistic behavior when this involves a danger to the self (Carlo et al., 2007), the findings suggest restorative discipline may be promoting the adoption of a defender role, even when danger is involved. This might be explained by the positive effects of restorative practices on moral responsibility and prosocial behavior towards the victim. Moral responsibility, promoted through positive parenting, has the potential to convince adolescents they can behave in a morally correct manner (Scarrer, Schmader, & Lickel, 2009; Wenzel, Okimoto, Feather, & Platow, 2008).

Another interesting finding was the positive effects of restorative discipline on adolescents. Specifically, when parents reprimanded adolescents without stigmatization, they were facilitating in-depth reflection in their children. In other words, adolescents reflected on the negative effects of their misbehaviors and were more willing to repair the damage caused. The authors believe these results are further evidence that restorative discipline motivates close parent-adolescent relationships, which lead adolescents to perceive positive parental education as ethical and correct. This perception leads adolescents to believe parents behave fairly and respectfully, thereby, parental influence tends to increase.

The study indicates that positive parenting promotes moral emotions (empathy and shame) that have been demonstrated to be associated with the defender role (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006; Dunn, 2014; Olthof, 2012; Thornberg & Jungert, 2013; van der Ploeg et al., 2017). This finding is relevant because both moral emotions (empathy and shame) work as an internal regulator of prosocial behavior (Eisenberg et al., 2015; Williams, O’Driscoll, & Moore, 2014).

Contrary to expectations, findings suggest that gender does not seem to have a moderating effect on the relationships proposed by the model. Restorative discipline and a close parent-child relationship have a similar positive effect on moral development in adolescents and the adoption of defender role in both gender (Carlo et al., 2011). Therefore, further research is necessary to further untangle gender differences around bullying and defender roles. The inconsistencies found here could be related to the type of discipline practices and prosocial behaviors evaluated in the present study.

The poor adjustment rates of the alternative models support discarding the hypothesis of bidirectional relationships, which implies that adolescent characteristics are not affected by restorative discipline practices of parents. Some scholars suggest bidirectionalism is easier to find when studying the negative effects of negative parental practices, which are often after a child’s behavior. On the other hand, positive practices (e.g., restorative discipline) are usually self-regulated, which implies that they are barely influenced by adolescents’ characteristics (Brody & Ge, 2008; Deković et al., 2008). These findings have important practical implications, particularly due to the limited studies exploring the family’s influence on the role adopted by bystanders in bullying cases. In particular, these results are important in Mexico as family is an influential factor shaping adolescent behavior. These findings may potentially inform policymakers in regard to the role of family in further strategies implemented to lessen and prevent bullying. Programs of this type should be focused on exercising restorative discipline, promoting a positive family climate, and providing social support to children. These interventions might in turn stimulate students’ moral development and prosocial behavior with peers.

Despite the relevance of these findings, the results did have limitations and should be interpreted with some caution for several reasons. First, the cross-sectional design used does not allow causal relations to be established between the explored variables. Therefore, further research using longitudinal or experimental designs is highly encouraged as a means to gain better understanding. Second, although, participants were a reliable source of information when describing parental behavior (Oyser, Day, & Harper, 2013; Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992; Oliva, Parra, Sánchez-Quejia, & López, 2007), findings were based on self-reported data. As a result, social desirability responses among participants might have affected the estimates. Finally, this sample came from a particular area of Mexico, which may or may not be similar to other populations. All these conditions limit the generalizability of the present findings.

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References


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