

ISSN: 2605-5295

# MLS PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH

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January - June, 2026

VOL. 9 No. 1



PSYCHOLOGY  
RESEARCH



<https://www.mlsjournals.com/Psychology-Research-Journal>

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## Editorial

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We are pleased to present the new issue of our scientific journal, a volume that brings together rigorous research aimed at understanding diverse psychosocial realities from childhood to adulthood. The first article offers a valuable integrative review of parental stress in single-parent families with adolescent children. Using the SIPA index as a key reference, the authors analyze the overload of responsibilities faced by these families and underscore the urgent need to design and implement culturally adapted psychoeducational programs for the context of Guatemala and other international regions to mitigate this impact.

The second manuscript addresses a problem of profound social gravity: grief and prosocial behavior in children orphaned by femicide in the Dominican Republic. Through a quantitative approach, the authors explore how the trauma of prior domestic violence and the abrupt loss of the maternal figure shape the process of childhood grief, providing crucial findings for the development of specialized intervention strategies that promote resilience and comprehensive emotional support in these children. The third article shifts our focus to organizational psychology with a gender perspective. Its qualitative phenomenological study analyzes the coping strategies employed by women in situations of forced displacement in the face of psychosocial risks and harassment in the workplace within the Colombian context. It highlights the triple vulnerability they face and provides essential guidelines for building safer and more equitable work environments.

Continuing with the gender perspective in organizations, the fourth article presents a comparative and mixed-methods analysis of leadership styles in the Senior Public Management System of the Magallanes and Chilean Antarctic Region. The researchers examine the cultural and organizational barriers that still persist for women in high-level positions, offering a clear picture of the progress made and the remaining challenges in terms of equity and parity in public sector leadership.

Meanwhile, the fifth article in this issue offers a reflective and educational analysis of the direct influence of adults on the emotional and preventative challenges faced by children and adolescents. The study makes a strong appeal for empathy, arguing that attentive support, affective education, and timely intervention by caregivers are essential to prevent childhood problems and wounds from becoming structural traumas in adulthood.

The sixth article is a rigorous systematic review exploring family dynamics and psychological adjustment in same-sex parent families. Through an analysis of recent scientific literature, the authors debunk historical prejudices by demonstrating the prevalence of democratic parenting styles and completely healthy socio-emotional development in children, concluding that family diversity and the sexual orientation of the parents do not constitute risk factors for children's well-being.

The seventh contribution evaluates levels of stress, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment in relation to mindfulness practice and gender among teachers in the Dominican Republic. Their results reveal significant gender-based differences, reporting that female teachers show higher rates of burnout due to the double burden of work and family responsibilities, while also validating mindfulness as a palliative and protective tool against academic burnout.

Finally, the eighth article closes this volume with a valuable methodological and psychometric contribution to educational psychology. The author meticulously analyzes the psychometric properties of the CHASIDE vocational test in graduating high school students from a sample of the Honduran population. Factor analyses confirm the robustness, reliability, and validity of the internal structure of this tool, making it available to counselors as an optimal scientific resource for guiding the development of academic and professional life plans in young people.

Dr. Juan Luís Martín Ayala  
Editor Jefe / Editor in chief / Editor Chefe

**PARENTAL STRESS IN SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES WITH EVIDENCE FROM SIPA ASSESSMENTS AND PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN GUATEMALA AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT**

**Estrés parental en familias monoparentales con adolescentes revisión integrativa del uso del sipa y programas psicoeducativos en Guatemala y contextos internacionales**

**Martha Estela Polanco Riva**

Universidad Internacional Iberoamericana (Mexico)

([martha.polanco@doctorado.unini.edu.mx](mailto:martha.polanco@doctorado.unini.edu.mx)) (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4139-5008>)

**Ana Isabel Burguillos**

Hospital Universitario Virgen del Rocío (Spain)

([anaisabel.burguillos@gmail.com](mailto:anaisabel.burguillos@gmail.com)) (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6532-9048>)

**Manuscript Information**

**Recibido/Received:**15/12/25

**Revisado/Reviewed:** April 7, 1962

**Aceptado/Accepted:**16/05/26

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**ABSTRACT**

**Keywords:**

Parental stress, single parent families, adolescence, psychoeducational program, SIPA

Parental stress tends to increase significantly among single parents' families, particularly mothers, due to the burden of responsibilities, the lack of support networks, and sociotechnological transformations. The aim of this integrative review is to analyze the phenomenon of parental stress in single-parent families with adolescent children, with a particular focus on the Guatemalan context. An integrative literature review of scientific sources published in recent years in English and Spanish was conducted. The SIPA instrument (Stress Index for Parents of Adolescents) was considered as a methodological reference for assessing parental stress during adolescence. The findings, derived from the analysis of existing literature, highlight that parental stress is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by structural, individual, and family factors. In Guatemala, where there is a high percentage of single-parent families, there is still limited evidence regarding programs targeted aimed at this population. The literature suggests that psychoeducational programs can significantly reduce parental stress, improve family dynamics, and support the emotional development of adolescents. It is concluded that there is an urgent need to design and implement culturally contextualized interventions that strengthen parental competencies. This review seeks to lay the groundwork for future research and public policies aimed at improving family well-being.

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**RESUMEN**

**Palabras clave:**

Estrés parental, monoparentalidad, SIPA, adolescentes, Intervención psicoeducativas

El estrés parental tiende a incrementar significativamente en familias monoparentales, especialmente en madres, debido a la sobrecarga de responsabilidades, la falta de redes de apoyo y las transformaciones socio tecnológicas. El objetivo de esta revisión integrativa es analizar la evidencia científica sobre el estrés parental en familias monoparentales con hijos adolescentes, con énfasis en el contexto guatemalteco. Se llevó a cabo una revisión integrativa de literatura en bases de datos en inglés y español, considerando el uso del SIPA (Stress Index for Parents of Adolescents) como referente metodológico para la evaluación del estrés parental durante la adolescencia. Los hallazgos destacan que el estrés parental es un fenómeno multidimensional influido por factores estructurales, individuales y familiares. En Guatemala, donde existe un porcentaje alto de los hogares monoparentales, persiste escasa evidencia sobre programas dirigidos a esta población. La revisión evidencia que los programas psicoeducativos pueden reducir el estrés parental y, por consecuencia, mejorar la dinámica familiar como también favorecer el desarrollo emocional de los adolescentes. Se concluye que es urgente diseñar e implementar intervenciones culturalmente contextualizadas que fortalezcan las competencias parentales generando así evidencia útil para futuras investigaciones y políticas públicas orientadas al bienestar familiar.

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## **Introduction**

In the 21st century, family dynamics face increasingly complex demands that are transforming parenting patterns and profoundly affecting the well-being of caregivers. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced during adolescence, a transitional stage in which young people seek autonomy and identity, while parents must readjust their roles, creating significant tensions (Miller & Jacobson, 2023; Branje, 2018).

In this context, parental stress—defined as the emotional and physical strain experienced by caregivers when the demands of parenting exceed their perceived resources—has gained prominence in contemporary social and psychological research (Abidin, 1992). This is not merely a feeling of concern, but a prolonged state that can undermine the caregiver’s mental health and negatively affect their bond with their children, manifesting as emotional exhaustion, irritability, and a sense of helplessness (Daryanani et al., 2017). Understanding and assessing this phenomenon is essential for developing effective interventions that strengthen parenting and family well-being.

In recent decades, the need for standardized tools to accurately assess parental stress during adolescence led to the development of the *Stress Index for Parents of Adolescents* (SIPA), a benchmark psychometric instrument designed to provide a multidimensional assessment of the factors that contribute to parental psychological distress during this developmental period. The instrument makes it possible to identify not only the caregiver’s overall stress but also critical factors such as the adolescent’s adjustment, parenting competence, and the quality of the parent-child relationship—elements that are particularly relevant in emotionally demanding situations (Abidin, 1995; Abidin, Sheras & Konold, 1998).

This situation is exacerbated in contexts of socioeconomic vulnerability, such as those found in developing countries. Guatemala, for example, has a social structure marked by deep inequalities, complex cultural diversity, and unresolved historical challenges that directly impact family dynamics. Various national studies have documented the high prevalence of parental stress among single mothers, noting that this is exacerbated by the lack of training programs and institutional support (Bolerés, 2017; Galindo, 2013; Vielman, 2023).

The sole financial responsibility, single-parenting, and the lack of support networks create an environment of high demands and little support. These factors align with the dimensions assessed by instruments such as the SIPA, which examines how perceived demands exceed the caregiver’s resources, particularly in family structures with less social support. According to the National Institute of Statistics (INE, 2020), 17.8% of households in Guatemala are single-parent households, a figure that highlights a significant social reality requiring priority attention in the areas of public policy, mental health, and education.

Adolescence, as a critical stage of human development, requires an emotionally available and stable parent. In Guatemala, where more than four million people are between the ages of 10 and 19 (INE, 2019), the psychological well-being of caregivers is essential to the healthy development of young people. However, stressors have multiplied in recent years. The scientific literature indicates that parental stress is influenced not only by psychological and economic factors, but also by recent social changes, such as shifts in family communication patterns and the pervasive impact of technology on daily life. Phenomena such as the digital divide and parental *phubbing*—the act of ignoring one’s children in favor of a cell

phone—have been shown to undermine the quality of emotional bonds and family communication, contributing to symptoms of anxiety, depression, and isolation in adolescents (Xu et al., 2024; Wakai et al., 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing parental stressors. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2023) reported a nearly 25% increase in anxiety and depression disorders worldwide during the first year of the pandemic, with young people and women being particularly affected. Furthermore, it has been found that lockdown intensified stress in families with teenage children due to isolation, disruptions to family routines, and excessive use of digital technologies (Bülow et al., 2021). Recent studies indicate that parental stress acts as a mediator between caregivers' emotional regulation and psychological symptoms in children and adolescents (Orgilés et al., 2023). These findings show that the pandemic has had a lasting impact on family dynamics, increasing household instability and highlighting the importance of promoting caregivers' mental health and emotional stability as a key factor in adolescents' well-being.

Given this situation, the purpose of this article is to analyze and synthesize the available scientific evidence on parental stress in single-parent households, with a particular focus on the Guatemalan context. In particular, the study aims to explore the factors that trigger it—ranging from structural variables to family dynamics—as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of psychoeducational intervention programs designed for caregivers. Despite the available international evidence, there remains a near-total lack of studies that examine single-parent families, adolescence, and the systematic assessment of parental stress using the SIPA in Latin American contexts, particularly in Guatemala.

### **The Psychosocial Impact of Single-Parent Families**

International studies have shown that single mothers experience significantly higher levels of stress than married mothers, due to the burden of responsibilities they shoulder alone, as documented in a study conducted in South Korea (Kim & Kim, 2020). However, various studies have shown that children of single mothers do not necessarily experience academic or social difficulties, which has helped to dispel stigmatizing narratives about single-parent families. In a longitudinal study, Ricciuti (2004) examined the academic performance and emotional stability of children and adolescents raised in single-parent households and concluded that differences in school performance are better explained by factors such as the mother's educational level, her emotional health, and the availability of material and social resources than by the structural configuration of the household. In his longitudinal studies, Ricciuti observed that when single mothers have a good level of education, strong parenting skills, and effective support networks, children tend to develop at a rate comparable to that of their peers in two-parent families.

However, this picture cannot be generalized without qualification. While family structure alone does not determine a child's development, single-parent households are often associated with structural disadvantages, especially in contexts of poverty or social exclusion. In such situations, single mothers often face multiple barriers, such as limited income, excessive workloads, little time for parenting, and difficulty accessing quality health care or education. Taken together, these limitations increase the risk of chronic stress, which negatively affects parents' ability to respond emotionally and educationally to their children (Ricciuti, 2004).

The scientific literature has begun to emphasize not single-parenthood as a risk factor in and of itself, but rather the precariousness that often accompanies it in many sociocultural contexts.

The most recent evidence supports the effectiveness of parenting programs in high-risk settings. A 2025 report by the Australian *Institute of Family Studies* concludes that well-structured parenting programs can significantly improve parenting practices, parent-child relationships, and behavioral outcomes among adolescents and children (Australian *Institute of Family Studies*, 2025). Similarly, recent systematic reviews and meta-analyses have shown that behavioral and psychoeducational interventions, including those delivered online, can reduce parental stress, improve self-regulation, and strengthen children's emotional and behavioral skills (Tehrani, et al. (2023). These findings demonstrate that the implementation of community-based psychoeducational programs is a promising public health strategy for promoting family well-being and parenting effectiveness, especially among single-parent families or those with limited resources.

Therefore, parenting education not only has a direct impact on family dynamics and emotional well-being, but also has a ripple effect on the social fabric. According to Bronfenbrenner (1987), the family functions as a microsystem within a broader sociocultural system, interacting with other spheres of the community and society. Strengthening emotional bonds and promoting open communication at home helps reduce social risk factors that affect collective well-being. This approach is particularly relevant in contexts such as Guatemala, where inequality gaps limit access to support resources and psychoeducational programs; in these settings, parental education is an essential pillar for promoting family resilience and ensuring healthy environments for children.

In addition, the rise in single-parent families not only represents a structural shift in the family unit but also poses significant psychosocial challenges for parents who are raising children on their own. The many roles they must fulfill—such as economic, emotional, social, and educational roles—place them in a highly vulnerable position, which can lead to burnout, anxiety, feelings of inadequacy, and social isolation, especially when there are no support networks or effective public policies in place. (Radey et al., 2019). In this regard, it has been documented that single mothers are more likely to report symptoms of depression, anxiety, and parental stress compared to two-parent families (Cairney et al., 2003; Liang et al., 2019). In addition, Radey et al. (2019) emphasizes that access to support networks—including social, family, and community networks, as well as public and private resources—serves as a protective factor for mental health among low-income mothers.

### **Socioeconomic Challenges Facing Single-Parent Families in Guatemala**

The situation of single-parent families in Guatemala is shaped by a context deeply marked by structural factors such as poverty, social inequality, cultural stigma, and a lack of effective public policies specifically designed for this population. According to the National Survey on Living Conditions (ENCOVI, 2023), 56% of the Guatemalan population lives in poverty, of which 16.2% live in extreme poverty and 39.8% in non-extreme poverty. Recent research indicates that single-parent households, particularly those headed by mothers, are more economically vulnerable due to their reliance on a single income (Huitz, 2023). This economic

insecurity limits direct access to essential services such as health care, education, and adequate housing, thereby reinforcing patterns of structural exclusion that are passed down from generation to generation (INE, 2024; Program for Research and Social Studies, 2017).

Poverty in Guatemala is unevenly distributed geographically, which widens regional disparities in access to resources. According to data from ENCOVI (2023), 66.3% of people living in poverty reside in rural areas, compared with 46.6% in urban areas (National Institute of Statistics, INE, 2024). This disparity reflects a significant disadvantage for families living outside urban centers, where infrastructure is limited, job opportunities are scarce, and public services (health care, sanitation, housing, education) are often inadequate or nonexistent (Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance [MSPAS], 2020). In this context, rural single-parent families face a double vulnerability: on the one hand, the constraints inherent in regional poverty, and on the other, the individual burden of taking on the role of head of household without institutional support. Studies show that among low-income Guatemalan children and adolescents, food insecurity and exposure to violence—circumstances that are more common in contexts of poverty—are associated with increased symptoms of depression and anxiety, as well as a lower health-related quality of life (Human Rights Watch, 2025; PubMed, 2020).

This phenomenon occurs within a sociocultural context characterized by deeply entrenched patriarchal structures, where traditional gender roles continue to shape societal perceptions of single mothers (Esteve et al., 2022). As a result, women in Latin America face multiple forms of exclusion, such as social stigmatization, workplace discrimination, and limited institutional recognition of their role as heads of households (UN Women, 2022).

Mérida (2021) notes that these mothers often face an emotional double burden, as they juggle the demands of paid work with the unacknowledged demands of housework and caregiving. This overload leads to chronic exhaustion—both physical and psychological—which often goes unnoticed in public discourse. Recent studies, such as that by Kareem et al. (2024) show that single parenthood is closely associated with higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms, particularly when there are no institutional or community support networks. In addition, Pandya (2023) notes that the lack of formal support increases the emotional vulnerability of children of single mothers, although she emphasizes that educational and spiritual interventions can strengthen resilience and a sense of belonging at school, which serves as a key protective factor against the deterioration of psychosocial well-being. This situation highlights the urgent need to rethink social protection policies from an educational and social perspective, one that recognizes the unique circumstances of these families and ensures their equitable access to opportunities for development.

The family structure in Guatemala has undergone significant changes in recent decades. Factors such as demographic and migratory changes, as well as shifts in labor and social dynamics, have influenced the structure of households. Longitudinal studies based on ENCOVI data show that between 2000 and 2014, the proportion of households consisting of couples with children under the age of 15 declined, while the diversity of family arrangements increased, including single-parent households, single-person households, and multigenerational families. This reflects a shift away from the traditional nuclear family model that historically characterized Guatemalan families. (Espino et al. (2021). This change reflects an

adaptation to new social and economic realities, but it also poses challenges in terms of institutional and social support.

### **Assessment of Parental Stress and the Basis of the SIPA in Single-Parent Households with Adolescent Children.**

The assessment of parental stress in single-parent families with adolescent children is a field of study that has received little attention in Latin America, despite the steady growth of these family structures in the region. Internationally, instruments such as the *Stress Index for Parents of Adolescents* (SIPA) have proven effective in providing a multidimensional assessment of the factors that contribute to parental psychological distress, particularly in contexts of high emotional demands (Abidin, 1995; Abidin, Sheras & Konold, 1998). However, its application in empirical studies has been concentrated primarily in North American and European countries, while in Latin American contexts its use remains virtually nonexistent.

The importance of effectively measuring parental stress in highly vulnerable populations provides a solid framework for accurately identifying the areas where single-parent families need the most support. Promoting stronger family environments—particularly by strengthening family cohesion and the perception of support networks—not only improves well-being within the family but also has a positive impact on community and social well-being. Recent evidence shows that parenting training programs strengthen parents' parenting skills and self-regulation, leading to significant improvements in family functioning and children's behavior, with positive effects that extend to the family's social environment (Sanders et al., 2023).

In short, the lack of studies using SIPA with single parents in Guatemala not only highlights a methodological gap but also presents an opportunity to generate robust local empirical evidence that can inform public policy and targeted psychoeducational programs. This study aims to fill this gap by applying the SIPA to single-parent families in Guatemala, with the goal of providing a detailed and context-specific assessment of parental stress and designing effective interventions to reduce it.

### **Structure and Dimensions of the Quantitative Assessment Instrument *Stress Index for Parents of Adolescents* (SIPA)**

The *Stress Index for Parents of Adolescents* (SIPA), developed by Abidin, Brunner, and Flint (2006), is a specialized adaptation of the classic *Parenting Stress Index* (PSI), designed specifically to assess parental stress in the context of adolescence. This stage of development presents unique challenges stemming from the biological, emotional, and social changes that adolescents undergo, which can significantly increase the emotional burden on caregivers. The SIPA has demonstrated high levels of validity and reliability across various populations and is widely used in clinical, educational, and community settings (Abidin et al., 2006).

The SIPA conceptual model is based on a multidimensional view of parental stress, which organizes the assessment into three main domains: the Adolescent Domain (AD), the Parent Domain (PD), and the Adolescent-Parent Relationship Domain (APRD). Each of these domains is broken down into subscales that help identify specific areas of tension and conflict within the parenting experience.

#### **Adolescent Domain (AD)**

This section examines the behavioral, emotional, and social characteristics of adolescents that can be significant sources of stress for parents. The included subscales are:

- **Emotional Lability (MEL):** It measures the adolescent's emotional instability, such as extreme mood swings, irritability, or disproportionate reactions. These behaviors can make daily life difficult and cause emotional strain for parents.
- **Social Isolation and Distancing (ISO):** It assesses the extent to which the adolescent feels disconnected from their family or social environment, which can lead to feelings of frustration or concern on the part of the caregiver.
- **Crime and Antisocial Behavior (DEL):** It addresses aggressive, defiant, disruptive, or illegal behavior. This type of behavior leads to a significant increase in parental stress, both because of the inherent risk and because of its impact on family dynamics.
- **Failure to Achieve or Persevere (ACH):** This refers to a teenager's difficulty in sticking with personal or academic goals. This pattern can be a source of interpersonal conflict, especially when it clashes with the parent's expectations.

#### **Father or Mother Domain (PD)**

This section examines the individual and relational factors in adults that influence their experience of stress. It includes the following subscales:

- **Life Restrictions (LFR):** Assess the perception that parental responsibilities limit the caregiver's autonomy, leisure time, social life, or professional development.
- **Relationship with partner (REL):** It examines the impact that raising a teenager has on emotional stability and the quality of a couple's relationship, when such a relationship exists.
- **Social Alienation (SOC):** This refers to the feeling of isolation or social disconnection caused by the demands of parenting or the lack of support networks.
- **Negligence (INC):** It explores emotions related to negative self-assessment of one's role as a parent, such as the feeling of not being a good parent, frustration with daily challenges, or guilt over past decisions.

#### **Adolescent-Parent Relationship Domain (APRD)**

This domain focuses on the quality of the interaction between the adolescent and the parent, while also taking into account the impact of life stressors (*Life Stress LS*) that may affect that relationship. These include situations such as job loss, illness, economic crises, migration, and other disruptive events that directly influence relationship dynamics.

The three-part structure of the SIPA makes it possible to capture the complexity of parental stress during adolescence, clearly distinguishing between factors arising from the adolescent's behavior, the caregiver's individual circumstances, and the characteristics of the parent-child relationship itself. This classification is key to establishing risk profiles and designing tailored, context-specific interventions.

For example, a parent who scores high on the Life Restrictions and Social Alienation subscales may benefit from self-care strategies and efforts to strengthen their support networks. In contrast, a profile with high scores in Parental Incompetence and Adolescent Delinquency may require a more comprehensive therapeutic approach that combines psychoeducational guidance, emotional support, and, possibly, systematic family intervention.

In the Guatemalan context, where factors such as single-parent households, structural poverty, forced migration, and limited access to psychosocial services are

common, the SIPA is a particularly useful diagnostic tool for assessing parental stress in single-parent families with adolescent children. The findings of Alonzo et al. (2021) on the impact of the pandemic on parents in vulnerable communities underscore the importance of assessing specific stressors and developing context-specific interventions.

### **Conceptual Framework of Parental Stress According to the SIPA**

Parental stress is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that manifests itself across various interrelated dimensions. This conceptualization addresses the need to understand the various sources of stress that parents experience during the child-rearing process, particularly in socially vulnerable contexts, such as single-parent households. According to Abidin (1992), parental stress can be broken down into dimensions that allow for a more precise identification of the factors that contribute to parents' psychological distress. These dimensions are incorporated into instruments such as the *Parenting Stress Index* (PSI) and its version for parents of adolescents, the *Stress Index for Parents of Adolescents* (SIPA), both designed to capture the complexities of the parent-child bond based on the child's developmental stage (Abidin, Sheras, & Konold, 1998).

According to the model proposed by Abidin (1990, 1992), the main dimensions of parental stress include:

1. **Characteristics of adolescents:** This dimension encompasses aspects of adolescent behavior that may be problematic or challenging for parents, such as hyperactivity, impulsivity, difficulty following instructions, or poor emotional adaptability. When these characteristics are perceived as difficult to manage, they can significantly increase the stress of caregiving. The evidence suggests that this effect is more pronounced in contexts of vulnerability. (Wang & McLroy, 2023).

2. **Parent characteristics:** This area encompasses the psychological and emotional aspects of the parent, such as parental self-esteem, expectations regarding the parenting role, a sense of competence, and overall mental health. Parents who experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, or emotional exhaustion tend to exhibit higher levels of parental stress (Deater-Deckard, 2004).

3. **Parent-child interaction:** The quality of the emotional bond between parent and child is also a key factor. When a relationship is marked by frequent conflicts, poor communication, or difficulties in regulating each other's emotions, parental stress intensifies (Crnic & Low, 2002). A breakdown in this interaction not only increases the caregiver's stress but can also negatively affect the child or adolescent's social-emotional development.

4. **Situational context:** This dimension includes external factors such as work overload, poverty, food insecurity, social isolation, and a lack of support networks. In the case of single-parent families, these conditions are exacerbated by the absence of shared parental responsibility and by the sole burden of domestic, financial, and emotional responsibilities (Prime et al., 2020; Alonzo et al., 2021).

5. **Restrictions on the father's life:** This refers to the impact that parenting has on a parent's personal opportunities, such as free time, career development, socializing, or rest. Parents who feel that their autonomy has been severely limited by the demands of parenting experience higher levels of frustration and exhaustion (Adams et al. (2021).

These dimensions should not be viewed as isolated entities, but rather as dynamic and interdependent systems. For example, a mother with limited financial resources (situational context) and a son with special educational needs (adolescent

characteristics) may experience an increase in her perception of parental incompetence (parental characteristics), which undermines the emotional bond between them. This systemic interaction underscores the need to apply comprehensive assessment tools, such as SIPA, which enable the identification of these risk areas in a nuanced manner and guide context-specific intervention strategies. In addition, recent studies have identified new dimensions related to technology use, the post-pandemic context, and digital family dynamics. Studies such as those by Choi et al. (2022) and Adams et al. (2021) note that parental stress is also influenced by emerging factors, such as managing online learning, monitoring social media, and the imbalance between personal life and working from home, creating new sources of emotional strain for parents.

In conclusion, recognizing the many dimensions of parental stress is essential for an accurate assessment and effective intervention. This holistic approach makes it possible not only to address the symptoms of stress, but also to address its structural and emotional causes. This approach will be key to the design and implementation of the intervention program aimed at reducing parental stress among single parents with teenage children, which is the focus of this research.

## Method

This study is part of an integrative review, in accordance with the methodological framework proposed by Whittemore & Knafl (2005), which allows for the integration of theoretical and empirical studies employing diverse methodologies in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of interest. This approach provides a systematic process for collecting, analyzing, and critically interpreting the literature, facilitating the identification of trends, gaps, and significant contributions.

The review was conducted in accordance with the guidelines for narrative-style systematic reviews, with the aim of identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing studies that address parental stress in single-parent families with adolescent children, paying particular attention to their applicability in the Guatemalan context.

A systematic, manual search was conducted across multiple academic databases and institutional repositories; the searches were performed between February 1, 2024, and October 15, 2025. The following databases were used for the literature search: *Scopus*, *PubMed*, *Web of Science*, *SciELO*, *Redalyc*, *APA PsycINFO*, *Google Scholar*, and *repositories from Guatemalan universities (USAC, URL, UVG, FM)*. Boolean operators and keywords in Spanish and English were used. Key terms included: “parental stress,” “single-parent families,” “single fathers,” “single mothers,” “adolescents,” “parenting programs,” “SIPA,” “parental stress,” “single-parent families” and “psychoeducational intervention” Synonyms and related terms were also included to cover the entire thematic spectrum.

The following describes the steps taken to identify, select, and analyze the studies, as well as the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The synthesis process made it possible to compile the evidence matrix and identify existing research gaps.

### **Review criteria (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005)**

#### **1. Identification of the problem**

The aim of this review was to synthesize the scientific evidence on parental stress among single parents of adolescents and to examine the effectiveness of psychoeducational programs designed to reduce such stress. A significant research gap was identified, given the SIPA's specificity in assessing parental stress during adolescence and the lack of regional studies that use this instrument in Spanish. Although the SIPA has been widely used internationally with parents of adolescents, no evidence was found of its exclusive use with single parents in Latin America. This review therefore aims to help fill a significant gap in the existing literature.

## **2. Literature Review**

The initial search identified approximately 450 articles in international and Latin American databases. Priority was given to including recent publications, supplemented by essential classic works to establish the theoretical framework and the use of the SIPA instrument. The inclusion of the descriptor "SIPA" made it possible to identify studies that use this tool, although there was a significant shortage of such studies in Spanish-speaking contexts.

## **3. Evaluation and selection of studies**

To ensure the methodological quality of the included studies, aspects such as the clarity of the study design, the validity and reliability of the instruments used (including the SIPA where applicable), the appropriateness of the study population, the consistency between objectives, methodology, and results, and the rigor of the data analysis were evaluated.

The selection of articles was carried out in three stages:

- Literature review: 150 studies were excluded because they did not address single-parent families, adolescents, parental stress, or psychoeducational programs for parents.
- Review of abstracts: Of the remaining 300 studies, 250 were excluded because they did not meet the inclusion criteria (target population: single parents with adolescent children; measurement of parental stress; or evaluations of psychoeducational interventions).
- Full-text review: Fifty full-text articles were analyzed, and 15 studies were ultimately selected. Some studies had methodological shortcomings (for example, the absence of SIPA or a population that was not exclusively single-parent households), but they were included because they provided relevant evidence for understanding the phenomenon of interest. In other cases, studies that did not use the SIPA were included because of their conceptual relevance to the analysis of parental stress in single-parent families.

## **4. Data extraction and synthesis**

A synthesis matrix was created, in which the following information was recorded: authors, year, country or context, sample characteristics, measurement instruments, key findings, and relevance to psychoeducational interventions. This procedure made it possible to identify patterns, relationships between variables, and gaps in the research, facilitating

comparisons between international and Latin American contexts. The measurement instrument, including the presence or absence of SIPA, was classified as a primary outcome variable.

## **5. Presentation and Analysis of Results**

To analyze the selected studies, a comparative table was created to organize the relevant information from each article, identifying common patterns, research gaps, and theoretical or methodological contributions.

A thematic analysis was also conducted, following the recommendations of Braun and Clarke (2006) within the framework of the integrative review by Whitemore and Knafl (2005), in order to group the findings according to recurring conceptual dimensions in the literature. This process made it possible to develop preliminary analytical categories, which guided the subsequent interpretation of the results.

The emerging thematic categories were:

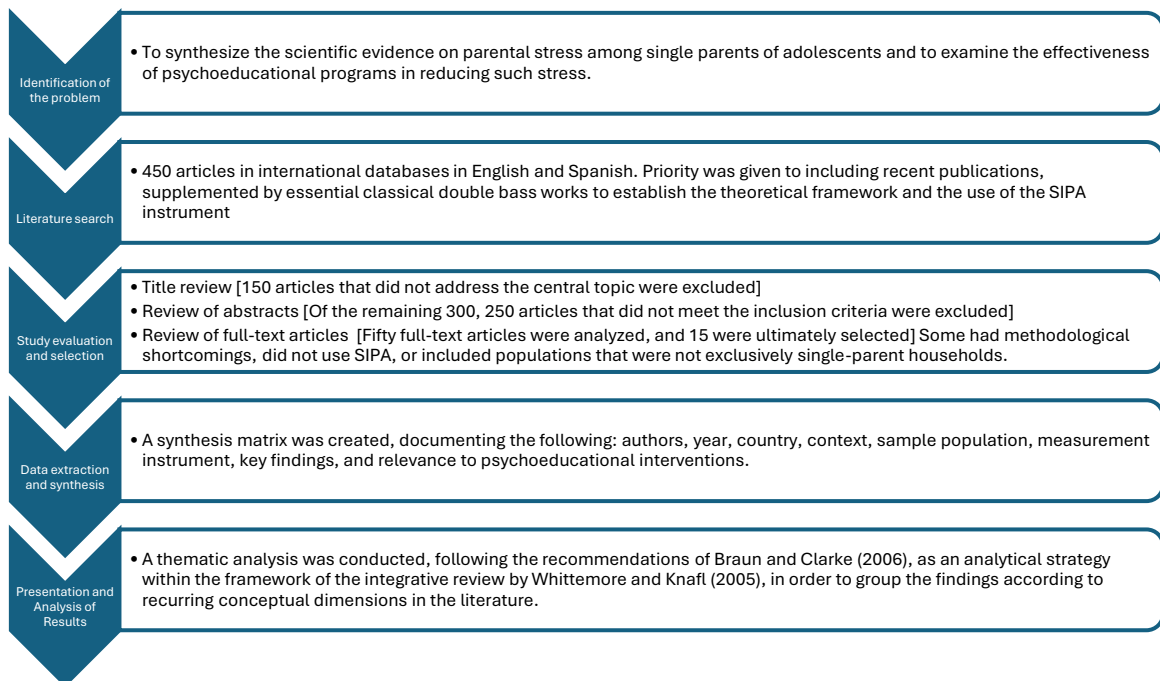
- Factors associated with parental stress among single parents.
- The Impact of Parental Stress on Family Dynamics and Relationships with Adolescent Children.
- Coping strategies and the effectiveness of psychoeducational programs in reducing parental stress.

The analysis identified both similarities and differences among the studies reviewed and highlighted gaps in knowledge, particularly the scarcity of research in Latin America and the limited use of the SIPA in Spanish-speaking contexts, which underscores the need for future research that explores these variables in greater depth.

To clarify the methodological procedure followed, Figure 1 schematically presents the phases of the integrative review applied to the study according to the methodology of Whitemore and Knafl (2005), and Table 1 shows the integration of these phases with the stages of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), providing a systematic and transparent overview of the process used.

**FIGURE 1**

Stages of the integrative review applied to the study.



*Note. Adapted from Whittemore & KnafI (2005)*

**TABLE 1**  
 METHODOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS OF WHITTEMORE & KNAFL (2005) AND BRAUN & CLARKE (2006)

Stage	Description according to Whittemore & Knafl (2005)	Application in the review	Reference or complementary technique (if applicable)
1. Identification of the problem	Clearly define the phenomenon of interest and its context.	The objective was to analyze the scientific evidence on parental stress among single parents of adolescents and to evaluate the effectiveness of psychoeducational programs designed to reduce such stress. A research gap was identified regarding Latin American contexts and the use of SIPA in Spanish.	
2. Literature Search	Develop a systematic search strategy	International and regional databases were consulted ( <i>Scopus, PubMed, Web of Science, SciELO, Redalyc, and Google Scholar</i> ). Boolean operators and keywords in Spanish and English were used: "Parental stress," "single-parent families," "single fathers," "single mothers," "psychoeducational interventions," "SIPA," "parental stress," "single-parent families," "psychoeducational intervention."	
3. Data Analysis	Determine the quality, appropriateness, and relevance of the included studies.	A total of 450 articles were reviewed; after applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 15 studies were ultimately selected. A data extraction form was used, including the following variables: author, year, country, sample, objective, methodology, and relevance or main contribution.	
4. Data analysis and synthesis	Integrate the results by comparing, categorizing, and summarizing the information.	A summary matrix was created to organize the findings. Similarities, differences, and conceptual patterns were identified among the studies. The findings were grouped into thematic categories related to parental stressors associated with adolescent children, coping strategies, and psychoeducational support.	Braun & Clarke (2006) Inductive thematic analysis as a technique for coding and grouping themes.

Organize and present the results in a coherent manner, integrating findings and gaps.

The results were summarized into three main thematic categories:

1. Factors Associated with Parental Stress Among Single Parents
2. The Impact of Parental Stress on Family Dynamics and Relationships with Children
3. Coping Strategies and the Effectiveness of Psychoeducational Programs

The study highlighted research gaps in Latin American contexts and the limited use of SIPA.

Braun & Clarke (2006): interpretation of themes and construction of final categories.

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Source: Adapted from (Whittemore & Knafl (2005) and Braun & Clarke ((2006)

## Results

The findings of the review were organized according to the established methodological criteria: single-parent households, the presence of adolescent children, the use of the SIPA (*Stress Index for Parents of Adolescents*) or similar tools, and the existence of psychoeducational interventions aimed at reducing parental stress. The information from the selected studies was organized into comparative evidence tables, which made it possible to identify common patterns, research gaps, and methodological and theoretical contributions.

The review included academic articles, technical reports, doctoral dissertations, and empirical studies published in recent years, in Spanish and English, that met at least some of the following criteria:

- Single parents with teenage children (ages 10 to 19).
- Assessment of parental stress, either directly or through related variables such as emotional regulation, parental burden, or family functioning.
- Use of the SIPA tool or similar tools.
- Psychoeducational interventions aimed at improving family dynamics or reducing parental stress.

### Key Findings

1. Single-parenthood is associated with higher levels of parental stress; various studies show that single parents, especially mothers, face greater burdens and multiple demands. The accumulation of stressors and a lack of social support significantly increase parental stress (Sartor, Large, & Troster, 2023; Wang, 2023; Raley & Sweeney, 2020). This pattern is observed both in international contexts and in research conducted in Guatemala, where single mothers report economic, social, and emotional strain (NARU Guatemala, 2022)
2. Adolescents play a significant role in family dynamics; the adolescent stage gives rise to more complex parental conflicts related to behavior, academic expectations, and social demands. Studies indicate that adolescents in single-parent families present greater challenges for caregivers, amplifying certain parenting stressors compared to younger children (Chappel et al., 2014;

Melancon et al., 2019). Local studies highlight the challenges adolescents from single-parent families face in managing their emotions and social skills.

3. Using the SIPA instrument

The reviewed studies document the validity and sensitivity of the SIPA in assessing key domains of the parenting experience, including the relationship with the adolescent, the parenting role, and the caregiver's life constraints (Abidin, 1992; Ozturk, Moretti, & Barone, 2019; May Eadeh et al., 2019). The SIPA is primarily used in clinical settings (e.g., adolescents with ADHD) or with the general population, without specifically targeting single-parent families. The review did not identify any studies that specifically applied the SIPA to single-parent households with adolescents in Guatemala.

4. Insufficient and unfocused psychoeducational interventions

The review reveals a lack of programs specifically targeting single-parent families with adolescents that include robust longitudinal evaluations. Some international studies present interventions based on emotional regulation, parenting skills, and social support (Cipric et al., 2020; Tejada-Gallardo et al., 2020; Heintzelman et al., 2020; Ozturk et al., 2019); however, few of these programs are developed in resource-limited settings or for Spanish-speaking populations.

### Identified Gaps

- There is a lack of studies conducted in Guatemala that examine single-parent households, adolescence, the use of SIPA, and psychoeducational interventions.
- Limited use of the SIPA in Spanish-speaking single-parent households with adolescents.
- There is a lack of documentation on interventions tailored to settings with limited resources or single-parent families.

### Presentation of the Evidence

To clarify the findings, a total of 15 articles were analyzed and organized into tables that present the relevant information in a systematic manner:

**Table 1.** Integration of the phases of the integrative review with the stages of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), providing a systematic and transparent overview of the methodological process.

**Table 2.** Included studies that used the SIPA: author, year, objective, methodology, sample, main contribution.

**Table 3.** Relevant studies that did not use SIPA: author, year, objective, methodology, sample, main contribution.

**Table 2**

**Research Framework**

**Studies using SIPA**

Author / Year	Objective	Methodology	Exhibit	Main contribution
Eadeh, A., et al. (2019)	Validating the SIPA in parents of adolescents with ADHD	Factor validation and convergent validity analysis	327 parents of teenagers with ADHD (U.S.)	Confirm the validity and reliability of the SIPA; identify factors associated with parent-adolescent conflict
Ozturk, Y., Moretti, M., & Barone, L. (2019)	Assessing reductions in parental stress following a psychoeducational program	Pre-post quasi-experimental study, attachment-based intervention	44 parents and teenagers (Italy)	Significant reduction in parental stress in the SIPA domain
Karst, J.S., et al. (2014)	Measuring changes in parental stress in families with adolescents with autism	Pre-Post, social/family intervention	46 parents of teenagers with autism	Some SIPA domains improved following intervention, demonstrating their usefulness in specific populations
Chung, S., Lee, H., & Seoi, Y. (2019)	Validate the Korean version of SIPA (K-SIPA)	Validation of the instrument	540 Korean parents of teenagers	High reliability and convergent validity; feasible cultural adaptation
Chung, S., Jung, H., & Yang, J. (2020)	Evaluate the effects of a psychoeducational clinical intervention	Before and After the Procedure	412 Korean parents of teenagers	The 37-item version maintains good reliability and validity; it is useful in studies with time constraints
Seri, L. G. (2004)	Evaluate the effects of a psychoeducational clinical intervention	Pre- and Post-Surgery	57 parents of teenagers with inflammatory bowel disease	Stress reduction according to SIPA and subscales following intervention
Wheatley, M.K., & Wille, D.E. (2009).	To evaluate the usefulness of the SIPA as a valid tool for measuring stress.	Longitudinal design	56 families who participated starting at age 8 and then again at age 14	It confirms that SIPA is a useful tool for studying parental stress during adolescence,
Melancon, F., et al. (2019)	To examine the relationship between parental stress in adoptive mothers and mother-child conflict	Correlational study	204 adoptive mothers of internationally adopted teenagers	Parental stress is associated with adolescent problem behavior and conflict
Henderson, S. E., et al. (2023)	Compare family therapy and individual therapy	Comparative study	205 caregivers with their teenage children	It shows that the SIPA is a valid tool for measuring parental stress in programs targeting families with adolescents

**Table 3**

**Relevant studies without SIPA**

Source: Created by us

<b>Author / Year</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Exhibit</b>	<b>Main contribution</b>
Wang, J. (2023)	Exploring the Relationship Between Parenting Styles and Adolescent Depression	Literature Review		Theoretical framework on the relationship between single-parent households, negative parenting styles, and the risk of depression in adolescents.
Daryanani et al. (2016)	To investigate cognitive vulnerabilities to depression in children raised by single mothers versus those raised in two-parent families	2-Year Longitudinal Follow-Up Study	42% single mothers and 368 adolescents (ages 12–16)	Single mothers exhibit more rumination, indicating a risk associated with heavier parenting burdens.
Cipric et al. (2020)	Study Evaluates Digital Intervention to Reduce Stress in Co-Parenting After Divorce	Randomized controlled trial (RCT)	289 divorced parents	Significant reduction in self-reported parental stress; evidence from a digital intervention
Sartor, Lange & Troster (2022)	Explores risk factors associated with stress in single mothers, such as how the accumulation of stressors influences parental stress	Quantitative survey study; analysis using multiple regression and ANOVAs	923 single mothers	It identifies multiple risk factors (low parental self-efficacy) and shows that the accumulation of stressors amplifies parental stress; it recommends interventions to reduce stress levels
Gibbons et al. (2021)	Describing the experiences of Guatemalan mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic, including parenting, emotional strain, and family adaptation Improving well-being and reducing emotional distress	Descriptive qualitative study (narratives, testimonials)	Guatemalan mothers with children during the pandemic	Provides real-world context on the burdens, stress, and challenges faced by mothers in Guatemala; contextual evidence of the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable families  Implications for psychoeducational intervention strategies in adolescents
Alonzo, D., et al. (2022).	Examining Parents' Mental Health During the Pandemic in Vulnerable Communities in Guatemala	Empirical study, parent survey, data analysis, and logistic regression	295 parents from 11 vulnerable districts in Guatemala	It highlights the high levels of parental stress in vulnerable settings and underscores the need for parental support interventions in similar contexts

## Discussion and Conclusions

## Discussion

The findings indicate that, although there is a significant body of literature on parental stress, single-parent families, and adolescence, these topics have been studied largely in isolation. There is still no substantial body of research that integrates all three elements simultaneously, nor any that applies the SIPA to single-parent families in Latin American contexts. This presents an opportunity for pioneering research in Guatemala.

Single-parenthood is identified as a risk factor, especially when combined with poverty, work overload, sole responsibility for caregiving, and a lack of social support (Sartor et al., 2023). Adolescence increases parenting challenges due to social, academic, and behavioral demands, highlighting the need for intervention programs that include strategies for emotional regulation, conflict management, and strengthening parenting skills. SIPA is primarily used in clinical samples, limiting its application to the general population. This suggests that a study applying the SIPA to single parents of adolescents in Guatemala would be innovative and relevant.

## Implications for Guatemala

Although no studies meeting all the criteria were identified in Guatemala, national data on single-parent households highlight the urgent need for applied research and the development of culturally adapted psychoeducational programs focused on:

- Emotional Regulation in Caregivers
- Coping strategies
- Strengthening support networks
- Improvements in parenting practices

With the aim of mitigating the effects of parental stress and improving the psychological well-being of adolescents.

## Limitations of the review

- Few studies examine single-parent households, adolescence, and the use of SIPA
- There may be publication bias, as there could be unpublished works, local theses, or unindexed reports.
- Limited geographical scope: The cultural and socioeconomic differences among the studies reviewed vary considerably, which may affect the generalizability of the results to the Guatemalan context.

## Conclusions

This integrative review demonstrates that there is a substantial empirical theoretical basis linking single-parenthood, adolescence, and parental stress; however, there remains a notable fragmentation in the studies and an almost complete lack of research that integrates these three elements using SIPA in single-parent populations. This shortcoming highlights a significant methodological gap and the need for rigorous research in Spanish-speaking countries, where sociocultural and economic dynamics differ significantly from the contexts in which most of the available literature was developed.

The findings of this review confirm that parental stress is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, shaped by the interaction between structural factors (poverty, precarious employment, inequality), individual factors (mental

health, parenting styles, coping), and family factors (conflict, communication, cohesion). Furthermore, evidence shows that single-parent families experience higher levels of stress due to an overload of responsibilities, limited access to social support, the dual role of providing both financial and emotional support, and exposure to environments with greater psychosocial risks. In addition, having teenage children intensifies these challenges, as this stage involves greater behavioral, emotional, academic, and social demands, which can exacerbate parental exhaustion and affect family dynamics.

Internationally, the literature consistently shows that psychoeducational interventions—both in-person and online—are effective in reducing parental stress, improving parenting skills, and strengthening adolescents' emotional well-being. However, in Guatemala and most countries in the region, there are no psychoeducational programs that have been formally evaluated or culturally adapted to the specific needs of single-parent families, even though they account for a significant percentage of all households. This lack of validated interventions represents a critical gap in terms of prevention, care, and public policy design.

Consequently, we recommend conducting context-specific empirical studies that utilize validated tools such as SIPA and evaluate psychoeducational interventions designed specifically for single-parent families with adolescent children. Such research will help generate solid evidence for the development of public policies aimed at family well-being, optimize community resources, and strengthen the resilience of parents and children in socially vulnerable situations. Moving in this direction will significantly contribute to closing the academic and methodological gaps that have been identified, promoting the development of knowledge that is relevant and culturally meaningful for the region, and consolidating a research field that is still emerging in the Spanish-speaking world.

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## **Study of Prosocial Behavior and Grief in Children Orphaned by Maternal Femicide**

**Estudio de la Conducta Prosocial y Duelo en niños Huérfanos de madre por Femicidio**

**María Magdalena Guillén Sánchez**

Universidad Internacional Iberoamericana (Mexico)

([mmagdalenagsanchez1701@gmail.com](mailto:mmagdalenagsanchez1701@gmail.com)) (<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-3249-0677>)

**David Gil Sanz**

Universidad Europea del Atlántico (Spain)

([david.gil@uneatlantico.es](mailto:david.gil@uneatlantico.es)) (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7328-4978>)

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### **Manuscript information:**

**Recibido/Received:** 06/12/25

**Revisado/Reviewed:** April 13, 2026

**Aceptado/Accepted:** May 6, 2026

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Keywords:** prosocial behavior, femicide, domestic violence, grief in children, orphanhood.

This research explores the relationship between prosocial behavior and grief in children orphaned by maternal femicide, in a context where there is limited empirical evidence examining these variables jointly in Latin American populations, considering the influence of domestic violence before and during the event. The study followed a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional, and correlational design. The sample consisted of 56 children aged 8 to 13, belonging to 52 families from different regions of the Dominican Republic, selected through discretionary sampling. The Complicated Grief Inventory for Children (Prigerson et al., 1999) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ-Cas) were used to assess emotional and prosocial dimensions. The findings showed no statistically significant correlation between type of grief and prosocial behavior ( $p > 0.05$ ), nor with age or gender. However, at a descriptive level, trends were observed in which family dynamics and emotional climate are associated with the expression of prosocial behaviors, particularly among children who received greater emotional support. In this sense, the findings suggest that prosocial behavior does not depend exclusively on the level of grief, but rather on the interaction of contextual factors. These results are discussed considering previous evidence on protective factors in contexts of childhood violence and highlight the need for comprehensive psychosocial interventions aimed at strengthening family and community support systems to promote emotional adaptation and prosocial development in children experiencing traumatic loss.

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### **RESUMEN**

Esta investigación explora la relación entre la conducta prosocial y el duelo en niños y niñas huérfanos de madre por femicidio, en un

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**Palabras clave:**

conducta prosocial, feminicidio, violencia doméstica, duelo infantil, orfandad

contexto donde existe limitada evidencia empírica que analice de manera conjunta estas variables en poblaciones latinoamericanas, considerando la influencia del contexto de violencia intrafamiliar previo y durante el hecho. El estudio se desarrolló bajo un enfoque cuantitativo, con diseño no experimental, transversal y correlacional. La muestra estuvo compuesta por 56 participantes, de entre 8 y 13 años, pertenecientes a 52 familias de distintas regiones de la República Dominicana, seleccionados mediante muestreo discrecional. Se aplicaron el Inventario de Duelo Complicado para Niños (Prigerson et al., 1999) y el Cuestionario de Capacidades y Dificultades (SDQ-Cas) para evaluar las dimensiones emocionales y prosociales. Los resultados evidenciaron que no existe una correlación estadísticamente significativa entre el tipo de duelo y la conducta prosocial ( $p > 0.05$ ), ni con variables como edad o sexo. No obstante, a nivel descriptivo, se observaron tendencias en las que las dinámicas familiares y el entorno afectivo se relacionan con la expresión de conductas prosociales, especialmente en los niños con mayores niveles de acompañamiento emocional. En este sentido, los hallazgos sugieren que la conducta prosocial no depende exclusivamente del nivel de duelo, sino de la interacción de factores contextuales. Estos resultados se discuten en función de la evidencia previa sobre factores protectores en contextos de violencia infantil y resaltan la necesidad de intervenciones integrales que fortalezcan los sistemas de apoyo familiar y comunitario, a fin de favorecer la adaptación emocional y el desarrollo prosocial durante el proceso de duelo infantil.

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## **Introduction**

Femicide is one of the most extreme forms of gender-based violence; it goes beyond the loss of an individual life, affecting the social and community fabric. In Latin America, and especially in the Dominican Republic, it has become a public health and human rights issue. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2019), the country has one of the highest rates of femicide in the region, which has sparked public alarm and highlighted the need for comprehensive prevention and response policies.

In recent years, various studies have shown that femicide is not only a criminal issue but also a phenomenon with psychosocial effects that have long-lasting repercussions on families and communities (Huertas et al., 2021; Polo, 2022). This phenomenon is not only a personal tragedy, but it also affects the surviving children. In this context, reports from ECLAC's Gender Equality Observatory (2020) and the Association for Assistance to Abused Women (PACAM, 2021) have highlighted the steady increase in cases of femicide and the lack of psychological support strategies for surviving children. This situation reveals that gender-based violence does not end with the victim's death, but rather perpetuates a cycle of emotional suffering among the children and adolescents who are left orphaned.

Among the most serious consequences of this phenomenon are precisely these children and adolescents, who, in addition to losing their primary attachment figure, must cope with the grieving process amid emotional, economic, and social instability. In this context, femicide not only robs victims of their lives but also has a profound emotional impact on their surviving children, affecting their psycho-emotional development.

Recent scientific literature has begun to explore the impact of vicarious violence—defined as violence directed at children with the intent to harm their mother—and its implications for children's emotional and social development (Díaz et al., 2022; Gallego-Moreno & González, 2022; Ríos Lechuga et al., 2022; Villagrasa, 2020).

In the Dominican Republic, local research remains scarce. The lack of specific psychological programs targeting the children of femicide victims creates a gap in care that increases this population's emotional vulnerability. Grief resulting from violent loss tends to be more prolonged and complex, particularly when children lack professional support and family stability. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of national protocols for psychological intervention, which limits the institutional response and prolongs the emotional suffering of minors.

This view is consistent with that of Filippi et al. (2020), who point out that the trauma caused by the violent death of a mother can disrupt children's personality development, emotional regulation, and interpersonal relationships. In this regard, the loss of a mother in circumstances of extreme violence is a deeply traumatic experience that disrupts the natural course of a child's psychological development. Children who witness or learn of their mother's death at the hands of their father or his current partner often experience intense feelings of anxiety, sadness, and fear, accompanied by withdrawal, distrust of adults, and changes in their prosocial behavior (Huertas et al., 2021; Villagrasa, 2020). These manifestations not only point to unresolved grief, but also to the child's struggle to adapt to an emotionally devastating reality in which love, security, and stability are severely threatened.

Prosocial behavior in childhood, defined as voluntary actions intended to benefit others, is a key indicator of a child's social-emotional development and resilience (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989; Goodman, 1997). From an evolutionary perspective, this behavior arises from the interaction between family and school factors. It thrives in environments where affection and cooperation prevail, since the family is the primary setting for moral and emotional learning.

When this environment is shattered by violence, the child sees the very foundations upon which they build their empathy and their desire to help others disrupted.

Given the gaps identified and the importance of understanding the emotional dimension of the children's experiences, the objective of this study was to analyze the level of grief and its relationship to prosocial behavior in children who have lost their mothers to femicide in the Dominican Republic, with the aim of understanding how the experience of loss relates to the expression of helping, cooperative, and empathetic behaviors.

Despite advances in the literature, there is limited empirical evidence that examines these variables together in Latin American contexts, particularly in the Dominican Republic, highlighting a gap in scientific knowledge. Furthermore, most existing studies have addressed childhood grief and prosocial behavior separately, without examining how they interact in contexts of extreme violence such as femicide.

Accordingly, the aim was to describe the manifestations of grief observed in this population and to analyze their potential association with emotional and social adjustment. In addition, the study examined the influence of exposure to the violent event (whether or not the individual was present) on levels of grief and prosocial behavior, in line with the study's correlational approach.

Based on this approach, the hypothesis was proposed that there is a significant relationship between prosocial behavior and the type of grief experienced by children who have lost their mothers to femicide. However, the possibility that there is no direct relationship between the two variables was also considered, given the multitude of factors involved in the process of emotional and social adaptation. These hypotheses served as a guide for the methodological design and statistical analysis, directing the search for empirical evidence that would help us understand the link between emotional distress and the ability to act in a spirit of solidarity.

The study adopted a quantitative approach, employing a non-experimental, cross-sectional, and correlational design, which is suitable for exploring relationships between psychological variables without directly manipulating them, thereby providing empirical evidence on sensitive phenomena such as childhood grief.

In this regard, this study aims to provide empirical evidence and a deeper understanding of the emotional impact of femicide on children, by integrating an analysis of grief and prosocial behavior as complementary dimensions of human development. The findings of this study are intended to serve as a basis for future psychological and educational interventions that contribute to emotional healing and the promotion of more protective environments for children who have been orphaned as a result of gender-based violence.

## Method

The data collection for this study was based on a methodologically rigorous, ethical, and carefully planned process. The primary objective was to obtain valid and reliable data on the study variables, while ensuring respect, safety, and the emotional well-being of the participants. Given that this was a highly vulnerable population of children, the methodological design incorporated specific protocols to ensure a sensitive and protective approach.

During this phase, priority was given to implementing the tools in safe settings—primarily schools and family environments—under the direct supervision of the principal investigator, with support from a psychologist and a social worker assigned by the Supérate program, who provided technical and emotional support to both the children and their guardians. Their involvement was essential to ensuring compliance with ethical principles, as

well as to providing emotional support and facilitating effective communication with families. Before each session, a clear explanation of the purpose of the research was provided, tailored to the children's level of understanding. This ethical and human-centered approach struck a balance between scientific rigor and the sensitivity required to work with children who had lost their mothers, ensuring both the quality of the data and the emotional well-being of the participants.

### **Design**

This study employed a quantitative approach, using a non-experimental, cross-sectional, and correlational design, aimed at analyzing the relationship between the level of grief and prosocial behavior in children who have lost their mothers to femicide in the Dominican Republic. This type of design is particularly appropriate when the researcher seeks to describe phenomena and establish associations between variables without intervening in or manipulating the natural conditions under which they occur.

The cross-sectional nature of the study meant that data were collected at a single point in time, allowing researchers to capture the current state of the grieving process and the participants' behavioral manifestations within their context. Furthermore, the correlational approach made it possible to examine the degree of association between the main variables—grief and prosocial behavior—as well as their potential link to sociodemographic factors such as gender and age.

From a methodological perspective, this design made it possible to integrate statistical analysis with a contextual understanding of the phenomenon, ensuring that the results reflected the emotional and social complexity that characterizes children affected by the loss of a mother due to vicarious violence. The choice of this design also addressed the ethical and scientific need to observe reality without exposing participants to new painful or intrusive situations, thereby safeguarding their well-being.

### **Participants**

The study involved 56 children, aged 8 to 13, who had lost their mothers to femicide in the Dominican Republic. This age group was selected because it corresponds to a period of cognitive and emotional development during which children are capable of understanding and responding appropriately to assessment tools, while also being at a stage where they are consolidating social skills and prosocial behaviors relevant to the study's objectives. Participants were selected using non-probability purposive sampling, a method suitable for studies that require very specific inclusion criteria.

The inclusion criteria were as follows: being a resident of the country at the time of the event, being available to participate in the study, and having informed consent from legal guardians. Exclusion criteria were also considered, including: severe difficulties with reading or comprehension—as reported by the teacher or observed during the administration of the instrument—that prevented the student from answering the questions appropriately; and conditions that significantly limited the student's ability to understand the questions, even with external support.

The participants were identified through the Supérate program database, which maintains a registry of minors who are victims of violence. In addition, the study benefited from the collaboration of classroom teachers, who served as informants in the administration of the Schedule for Depression and Anxiety (SDQ), providing additional observations regarding the children's prosocial behavior and social interactions in the school setting. Their

participation helped broaden the analytical perspective by incorporating a contextual view of children's behavior within the educational setting.

The study complied with established ethical guidelines: informed consent was signed by the participants' legal guardians, who were fully informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and benefits. In addition, each child signed a consent form, written in clear language appropriate to their level of understanding, ensuring their voluntary participation. The Ethics Committee determined that the project met the required quality standards and granted its approval in Minutes No. CR-188 of the relevant meeting, issued on March 10, 2023 (Internacional Iberoamericana, 2023).

### **Instruments**

Validated tools were used to collect data that capture both the emotional aspects of grief and the children's prosocial behavior.

1. The Complicated Grief Inventory for Children (CGI, 39-item expanded version (ICG-R / ICG-RC)), originally developed by Prigerson et al., was administered. (1995) and adapted for children and adolescents by Melhem et al. (2013). This study used the Spanish translation and adaptation by González and Rodríguez (2017), to which additional semantic adjustments were made to ensure its comprehensibility to Dominican children. The IDC measures the intensity and frequency of symptoms characteristic of grief—including intrusive thoughts, persistent longing, irritability, and difficulties adjusting—using a five-point Likert scale. This instrument exhibits high internal consistency ( $\alpha = .94$ ) and adequate test-retest reliability ( $r \approx .80$ ), which supports its psychometric soundness.
2. Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Developed by Goodman (1997), this instrument assesses children's emotional, behavioral, and social well-being. It consists of 25 items distributed across five scales: emotional symptoms, behavioral problems, hyperactivity, difficulties in peer relationships, and prosocial behavior. In this study, the teacher version was used, which allowed for direct and contextualized observations of the participating children's behavior in school. The Spanish adaptation validated by Ortuño et al. was used. (2007), which is widely used in Latin American research, ensuring the linguistic and cultural equivalence of the instrument.

## **Procedure**

Following the selection and validation of the instruments, the data collection phase was carried out in educational and community settings that had been previously selected based on the participants' locations. Before beginning the process, authorization was obtained from the educational authorities, informed consent from the guardians, and verbal consent from the minors, as outlined in the methodology section.

The questionnaires were administered individually in quiet, suitable spaces designed to promote concentration. The program was supported by a psychologist and a social worker from the Supérate program, who provided technical and emotional support and ensured compliance with ethical protocols. The classroom teachers participated in the assessment by completing the teacher version of the Schedule for Depression and Anxiety (SDQ), providing contextualized observations on each child's behavior.

Upon completion, the instruments were reviewed to ensure completeness and internal consistency. The data was then coded and digitized, with quality controls implemented to ensure the accuracy of the records and the precision of the statistical analysis. The entire process was conducted in accordance with strict principles of ethics, confidentiality, and the protection of children's rights.

## **Data Analysis**

The data was initially coded and processed using the Census and Survey Processing System (CSPRO) software, which made it possible to organize and clean the dataset with a high degree of accuracy. Subsequently, statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 24, which facilitated the application of descriptive and inferential procedures. The accompanying graphs and tables were created in Microsoft Excel to present the results in a clear and accessible manner. In the first phase of the analysis, descriptive statistics—including means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages—were applied to characterize the sample of 56 children by age, sex, grade level, and time elapsed since the loss of their mother. This initial description made it possible to establish the participants' profile and served as the basis for analyzing the relationships between variables.

To examine the influence of whether or not participants had witnessed the violent act on their levels of grief, we used Student's t-test for independent samples, a technique suitable for comparing means between two groups. In addition, the chi-square test of independence was used to explore the relationship between categorical levels of grief and prosocial behavior, and Spearman's correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) was used to analyze the relationship between the raw scores of both variables. These procedures were consistent with the study's correlational design and with the nature of the data obtained.

The significance level adopted was  $\alpha = 0.05$ , a criterion widely used in the social sciences. p-values below this threshold were interpreted as statistically significant evidence against the null hypothesis; when they were above this threshold, it was concluded that there was insufficient evidence to establish a relationship between the variables, although the observed trends were taken into account.

All statistical procedures were conducted in accordance with standards of scientific rigor and methodological transparency. Although the analysis focused on the objectivity inherent in the quantitative approach, we maintained an attitude of sensitivity and respect toward the reality reflected in the data, recognizing that each score corresponds to the emotional experience of a child affected by maternal femicide.

## Results

Participants were selected in accordance with the criteria established in the methodological design, ensuring that the age range was appropriate and that the sample was representative of the phenomenon under study. The sample consisted of 56 children, of whom 27 were boys and 29 were girls, ranging in age from 8 to 13. They all lived in different parts of the Dominican Republic and were accompanied by a guardian or responsible relative, who in most cases were their maternal grandparents. The caregivers reported that the children had difficulty expressing their emotions and exhibited episodes of withdrawal or irritability, especially when confronted with memories associated with the traumatic event. In most cases, the adults responsible for their care did not have access to formal psychological support, which exacerbated the emotional strain on the family. Across the board, it was observed that caregivers adopted a variety of strategies to manage the children's behavior, ranging from overprotection to insisting on a "return to normal" (never discussing the issue).

Similarly, the results obtained through the use of the Complicated Grief Inventory (CGI) show that most children are experiencing a normal or borderline grieving process, characterized primarily by persistent feelings of sadness, longing, and difficulty accepting the loss. None of the cases showed signs consistent with pathological grief, indicating that, despite the emotional impact of the event, the participants are gradually adapting within the expected range for their developmental stage.

From a descriptive perspective, the IDC responses reveal that emotional manifestations were more pronounced in children who witnessed the violent incident; among them, expressions of sadness and constant memories of the deceased mother were observed more frequently. In contrast, those who were not directly exposed showed more restrained responses and relatively greater emotional control. Although these differences were apparent in the descriptive comparison, they did not reach statistical significance according to the inferential analysis subsequently performed using the chi-square test, which was used to test the association between the categorical levels of the IDC and the presence of the subject during the violent incident. In line with these observations, Table 1 summarizes the distribution of grief levels according to whether the child was present during the violent incident, illustrating how individual and contextual experiences influence the way children cope with the loss of their mother.

**Table 1**

*Percentage of boys and girls, by type of grief they have experienced, based on their relationship with the event*

In-person requirement	Type of mourning		Total
	Normal	Adjacent	
Present	88.0%	12.0%	100.0%
Not available	93.5%	6.5%	100.0%

*Note. Inventory of Complicated Grief in Children (Prigerson et al., 1999).*

With regard to the teachers' observations collected through the Self-Report Questionnaire (SDQ), high scores were identified for emotional symptoms and medium-to-high scores for prosocial behavior. Teachers reported that several of the children exhibited frequent episodes of sadness, difficulty concentrating, and a tendency to withdraw during school activities. High scores were also observed on the subscales for hyperactivity and peer relationship problems, reflecting difficulties in the participants' social-emotional and academic adjustment. While these findings could be linked to experiences of loss and violence, it is not possible to establish a direct causal relationship, given that the study design is cross-

sectional and did not include a comparison group. Therefore, the changes described should be interpreted with caution, recognizing that they reflect behaviors observed in a school setting that may be influenced by a variety of personal, family, and environmental factors.

In descriptive terms, the mean scores obtained on the Schedule for Depression and Anxiety (SDQ) showed that boys (n = 27) had a mean prosocial behavior score of 18.5 points (SD = 6.12), while girls (n = 29) had a mean of 16.24 points (SD = 6.44). To determine whether these differences were statistically significant within the total sample (N = 56), we applied Student's t-test for independent samples, the results of which indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups ( $p > .05$ ), suggesting a homogeneous distribution of prosocial behavior across the groups analyzed, indicating that gender did not significantly influence the manifestation of prosocial behaviors.

In addition, we examined whether direct exposure to the violent incident influenced levels of prosocial behavior as assessed by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ-CAS). The Student's t-test for independent samples did not reveal any statistically significant differences between the children who witnessed the violent act and those who did not,  $t(54) = 1.33, p = .19$ . Although the group that witnessed the event had a slightly higher mean score (difference = 2.26), this difference was not statistically significant, reflecting a similar trend in levels of prosocial behavior regardless of exposure to the event. Table 2 shows the distribution of participants according to the scores obtained on each subscale of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ-CAS).

**Table 2.**

*Percentages of boys and girls, by level of prosocial behavior*

Type of behavior	Behavioral level			Total
	Normal	Limit	Abnormal	
Emotional symptoms	72.7%	16.4%	10.9%	100.0%
Behavioral symptoms	67.3%	9.1%	23.6%	100.0%
Hyperactivity	72.7%	1.8%	25.5%	100.0%
Problems with classmates	83.6%	7.3%	9.1%	100.0%
Prosocial behavior	69.1%	12.7%	18.2%	100.0%

*Note. Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ-CAS).*

As can be seen, the "normal" level predominates in most of the dimensions assessed. In the case of prosocial behavior, this same trend holds true, although some cases with variations in expression were identified, falling within the borderline and abnormal ranges, indicating that these behaviors do not manifest in the same way among all participants.

Based on these results, and in order to examine the relationship between the level of grief and prosocial behavior, Table 3 was created, which presents the frequency distribution for both categorical variables. This descriptive analysis makes it easier to identify patterns in the data and serves as a basis for subsequent inferential analysis using the chi-square test.

**Table 3**

*Total prosocial behavior \*Type of grief*

Behavioral level	Type of mourning		Total
	A typical match	Border dispute	
Abnormal	11	1	12
Limit	9	2	11
Normal	30	2	32
Total	50	5	55

*Note. Source: SDQ questionnaire. One case was excluded from the analysis due to incomplete data for one of the variables (valid N = 55).*

To further explore the relationship between the level of grief and the expression of prosocial behaviors, a supplementary analysis was conducted using Pearson's chi-square test. For this analysis, the continuous scores obtained on the SDQ's prosocial behavior subscale were categorized into levels (low, medium, and high) according to the cutoff points established in the instrument's manual. Similarly, the IDC scores were classified into three categories—normal grief, borderline grief, and pathological grief—in order to examine associations between categories rather than merely numerical correlations.

The Pearson chi-square test was applied, supplemented by the continuity correction and Fisher's exact test, due to the presence of cells with low expected frequencies. The results ( $\chi^2 = 1.750$ ;  $p = 0.186$ ) indicate that no statistically significant differences were found between the variables ( $p > 0.05$ ) when analyzed categorically. Although there is variability in the participants' prosocial behaviors, the available data do not allow for the identification of any additional significant associations beyond the variables analyzed. Table 4 summarizes the characteristics observed in the sample.

**Table 4**

*Chi-square tests*

	Value	df	Asymptotic significance (two-sided)	Exact meaning (bilateral)	Exact meaning (unilateral)
Pearson's chi-square	1,750 <sup>a</sup>	1	0.186		
Continuity correction <sup>b</sup>	0.73	1	0.393		
Plausibility ratio	1,876	1	0.171		
Fisher's exact test				0.353	0.199
Line-by-line association	1,719	1	0.19		
Number of valid cases	56				

*Note:* a. Two cells (50.0%) are expected to have a count of less than 5; the minimum expected count is 2.41. b. This has been calculated only for a  $2 \times 2$  table.

In order to explore the possible association between levels of grief and scores on prosocial behavior, Spearman's correlation coefficient was applied, given that neither variable follows a normal distribution. The results did not show a significant correlation between grief and prosocial behavior ( $\rho = -.12$ ,  $p = .37$ ), indicating that no statistically significant relationship was observed between expressions of grief and the helping, empathetic, or cooperative behaviors assessed. This finding suggests that the degree of emotional distress resulting from the loss does not linearly determine children's ability to form prosocial bonds. Overall, the analyses conducted show that the variables of grief and prosocial behavior did not exhibit statistically significant associations within the sample studied. The results describe variations in the participants' emotional and social responses, although these differences do not reach statistical significance.

## Discussion

The results obtained allow us to assess the extent to which the objectives set were met, particularly that of examining the relationship between the type of grief and prosocial behavior in children who have lost their mothers to femicide. As shown in Table 1, most participants are going through a normal grieving process, while a smaller percentage exhibit borderline levels of distress, which may be related to the presence of supportive factors that promote emotional adjustment, despite the context of loss and violence. Most children go

through an emotional adjustment process that falls within the expected range for their age. This pattern could also be explained by the presence of supportive family and school networks, as well as the support provided by social programs, which have contributed to their emotional stability.

In addition, the data from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), shown in Table 2, indicate that 69.1% of the children exhibit normal prosocial behavior, while 18.2% fall within the abnormal range and 12.7% are borderline. This pattern shows that, although most individuals continue to exhibit behaviors such as empathy, cooperation, and a willingness to help others, a smaller proportion struggles to consistently demonstrate these behaviors, which could be linked to the emotional impact of the loss of a mother and the quality of the emotional environment in which they live.

Since the main variables in the study were measured using psychometric instruments that generate ordinal scores, and given the structure of the data, nonparametric tests were used to examine the relationship between grief and prosocial behavior. The analyses conducted did not reveal any statistically significant differences in grief levels based on the variables considered. These findings should be interpreted with caution, since the lack of statistical significance does not imply that no relationship exists, but rather that there is insufficient evidence in this specific sample.

However, from a descriptive standpoint, there was a general trend toward fewer signs of grief among children who received ongoing psychological counseling or emotional support. This pattern may suggest, on an exploratory basis, that emotional support and professional guidance could be considered potential protective factors against trauma, promoting a healthier grieving process.

On the other hand, statistical analysis using the chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 1.750$ ;  $p = 0.186$ ) did not reveal a significant relationship between the type of grief and prosocial behavior; therefore, the main hypothesis, which predicted a direct association between the two variables, is not empirically confirmed. It is worth noting that, in the Complicated Grief Inventory (CGI), levels of grief are determined based on the intensity of emotional symptoms—such as persistent longing, sadness, or difficulty accepting the loss—rather than on the amount of time that has elapsed since the event. This suggests that the intensity of emotional distress may be linked to the child's adjustment.

From a humanistic perspective, the findings suggest that childhood grief in the context of femicide is not limited to sadness or longing, but rather involves an experience of rootlessness and insecurity that affects the most basic emotional dynamics. However, the prevalence of normal levels of grief and prosocial behavior may be linked to the presence of resilience mechanisms that children can develop when they have secure attachments and emotionally stable environments. In this vein, recent research agrees that secure attachment bonds and emotional support strengthen prosocial behavior and coping with adversity (Costa Martins et al., 2022; Gómez et al., 2021; Holmes et al., 2025).

The evidence also shows that the loss of a mother to femicide does not affect all children in the same way, but rather has different impacts depending on the level of support and guidance each child receives. Overall, the results indicate that most participants fall within normal ranges, both in terms of the grieving process and the display of prosocial behaviors. However, there is a smaller group of children who do exhibit significant behavioral and socio-emotional difficulties, particularly in terms of prosocial behavior, displaying withdrawal, impulsivity, or a reluctance to cooperate. Teachers reported behaviors ranging from hyperactivity to apathy or difficulty getting along with classmates—indicators that reflect not only emotional distress but also the child's attempt to adapt to a new reality marked by absence, violence, and, in many cases, stigma. These behaviors should not be interpreted as

signs of disobedience or disinterest, but rather as expressions of a child's suffering and the need for emotional support and specialized guidance.

The fact that some children demonstrated an ability to adapt despite the traumatic circumstances is significant and encouraging. This suggests the presence of protective factors, such as support from significant others, stability in the school environment, or the implementation of social programs that promote resilience. This finding is consistent with previous studies on coping with grief in childhood, which highlight the importance of a support network and emotional support in emotional recovery (Worden, 2009; Rasouli et al., 2022). However, the presence of emotional manifestations associated with distress—such as intense sadness, withdrawal, or restlessness—observed in several of the cases evaluated indicates that these coping mechanisms, while present, are not always sufficient to offset the magnitude of the trauma.

Beyond the statistical results, the findings of this study prompt reflection on the need to recognize children orphaned by femicide as individuals with rights, deserving of support, a listening ear, and protection. Understanding childhood grief from a human and contextual perspective involves taking collective responsibility for fostering resilience. In this regard, it is necessary to strengthen public policies, responsive educational strategies, and specialized psychological care services that help create environments where children can heal and develop holistically. However, these interpretations should be considered exploratory and inconclusive, consistent with the lack of statistical significance in the inferential analyses.

## Conclusions

This study examined the relationship between childhood grief and prosocial behavior in children who have lost their mothers to femicide. The findings showed that there is no statistically significant relationship between the two variables, indicating that the intensity of grief is not directly associated with the manifestation of prosocial behaviors in the sample studied.

From a psychological perspective, the findings highlight the need to view childhood grief not as a linear process, but as a dynamic, multidimensional experience that is deeply influenced by the circumstances surrounding the loss. When a mother's death is the result of gender-based violence, the child faces not only her physical absence but also a symbolic rupture of security, love, and trust in adult figures. This complexity requires a rethinking of clinical and educational approaches, incorporating comprehensive strategies that take into account trauma, identity, and the rebuilding of a sense of belonging.

From a social perspective, the findings raise questions for the institutions responsible for child protection in the Dominican Republic. The existence of programs such as Progresando con Solidaridad (PROSOLI) and the support provided by the SUPÉRATE organization represent significant progress; however, the evidence suggests that there is still a need to strengthen psychosocial interventions and ensure the continuity of long-term support. Children orphaned by femicide are a doubly vulnerable group: first, because of the violence that took their mothers from them, and second, because of the inadequacy of the support systems that are supposed to care for them. In this regard, the findings of this study provide evidence that can contribute to the design of specific public policies that integrate psychological support and educational follow-up.

This study expands our understanding of childhood grief in contexts of extreme violence, providing empirical evidence that engages with both theory and the social realities

of the country. A combined analysis of grief and prosocial behavior helps us understand how the emotional trauma caused by femicide manifests itself in the way children interact with others. However, these results should be interpreted with caution, as no statistically significant relationship was found between the variables analyzed.

At the descriptive level, potential variations in the propensity toward prosocial behavior were observed depending on the grief process. However, these variations do not allow for the establishment of conclusive relationships between the variables analyzed.

The study's limitations include the small sample size, the use of non-probability sampling, and the cross-sectional design, which limit the generalizability of the results and the ability to establish causal relationships between the variables analyzed. Furthermore, the lack of a comparison group limits the interpretation of the findings within a broader context.

From a theoretical and methodological perspective, the research shows that the complementary use of the Complicated Grief Inventory (CGI) and the Schedule for Depression and Anxiety (SDQ) made it possible to capture both internal emotional manifestations and behavioral manifestations observed by teachers and counselors, providing relevant empirical evidence—within the study's limitations—for the analysis of grief and prosocial behavior.

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## **Coping strategies for psychosocial risk in the workplace for women in situations of forced displacement**

### **Estrategias de afrontamiento para el riesgo psicosocial en el entorno laboral de mujeres en situación de desplazamiento forzado**

**Marcela María Morales Córdoba**

Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios (Colombia)

([marcela.morales@uniminuto.edu](mailto:marcela.morales@uniminuto.edu)) (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3763-8580>)

**Jarledis Salas Gutierrez**

Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios (Colombia)

([jarledis.salas@uniminuto.edu](mailto:jarledis.salas@uniminuto.edu)) (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7197-525X>)

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#### **Manuscript information:**

**Received/Recibido:** 20/09/25

**Reviewed/Revisado:** 03/02/26

**Accepted/Aceptado:** 10/03/26

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#### **ABSTRACT**

##### **Key words:**

Mental health, Forced displacement, Psychosocial risk, Women, Organizational psychology, Mental health

In the agricultural sector, organizations face the challenge of addressing the needs of their human talent, integrating critical issues such as mental health, gender, forced displacement and psychosocial risk. Despite the relevance of these issues, the current literature presents a void of information regarding the coping strategies employed by displaced women working in these types of environments, despite the high prevalence of the phenomenon. For this reason, the present research aimed to analyze the coping strategies used by a group of women in the face of work difficulties. The study was conducted under a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, using semi-structured interviews for data collection. The purposively selected group of participants was composed of 30 women with experience of forced displacement and employed on farms in the banana-growing region of Urabá, Colombia. The analysis, carried out through open and axial coding, revealed that female employees perceive indicators of psychosocial risk in their work environments, such as discrimination, harassment and gender-based violence. Despite these adversities, women have a set of coping strategies focused on problem solving, managing emotions, modifying egodystonic thoughts and seeking support networks. It is concluded that the coping resources of these workers are multidimensional and allow them to resiliently manage stressful situations.

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#### **RESUMEN**

##### **Palabras clave:**

Salud mental, Desplazamiento forzado, Riesgo psicosocial, Mujeres, psicología Organizacional

En el sector agrícola, las organizaciones enfrentan el desafío de atender las necesidades de su talento humano, integrando temas críticos como la salud mental, el género, el desplazamiento forzado y el riesgo psicosocial. A pesar de la relevancia de estos temas, la literatura actual presenta un vacío de información respecto a las estrategias de afrontamiento que emplean las mujeres en situación de desplazamiento que trabajan en este tipo de entornos, a pesar de la alta prevalencia del fenómeno. Por esta

razón, la presente investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar las estrategias de afrontamiento utilizadas por un grupo de mujeres frente a las dificultades laborales. El estudio se realizó bajo un enfoque cualitativo con un diseño fenomenológico, empleando entrevistas semiestructuradas para la recolección de datos. El grupo de participantes, seleccionado intencionalmente, estuvo compuesto por 30 mujeres con experiencia de desplazamiento forzado y empleadas en fincas del eje bananero del Urabá, Colombia. El análisis, llevado a cabo mediante codificación abierta y axial, reveló que las colaboradoras perciben en sus entornos laborales indicadores de riesgo psicosocial, como la discriminación, el acoso y la violencia de género. A pesar de estas adversidades, las mujeres disponen de un conjunto de estrategias de afrontamiento enfocadas en la resolución de problemas, el manejo de emociones, la modificación de pensamientos egodistónicos y la búsqueda de redes de apoyo. Se concluye que los recursos de afrontamiento de estas trabajadoras son multidimensionales y les permiten gestionar de manera resiliente las situaciones de estrés.

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## Introduction

In October 2023, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) warned of a significant increase in the problem of forced displacement, reaching 114 million people worldwide. This increase of 1.6 million over 2022 was intensified by conflicts in Ukraine, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, as well as humanitarian crises in Somalia, Afghanistan and the Gaza Strip (UNHCR, 2023). Within this population, women are a particularly vulnerable group: by December 2023, 46% of the 22.1 million people in a situation of forced displacement (SDF) were women, with gender-based violence being a main motive and a strategy of domination in contexts of criminal groups (United Nations Organization [UN Women], 2023).

Forced displacement is defined as non-voluntary migration, where people flee due to threats to their integrity, which generates impoverishment and the loss of social support networks (Besil, 2023). In the case of women in SDF, the consequences are devastating and affect their health, rights and safety (Donnelly et al., 2023). These women face problems such as widowhood, helplessness and subjection to physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence. They must also restructure their socio-family dynamics and adapt to a new environment (Ramirez et al., 2016). Several investigations show that SDF affects mental health, generating emotional, cognitive and physiological symptoms that can trigger mental disorders (Aceros et al., 2023). Therefore, several authors, such as Kyaw et al. (2023) suggest that intervention programs should focus on the development of psychosocial resources to manage stressors.

In July 2023, UNHCR, based on the fact that the number of people in situations of forced displacement exceeded 108.4 million in 2022, warned of the need to create inclusive environments and promote the rights of this population victimized by the conflict. The International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2023) emphasize that this population faces significant obstacles in accessing the labor market and formal employment, in part due to low qualifications in relation to available job offers. In this context, women in SDF face realities that lead to discrimination, social stigmatization and few economic opportunities, which exacerbate the problems of poverty and marginalization. Women, in particular, have a higher prevalence of informal employment and inadequate working conditions, such as lack of health insurance or insufficient remuneration (Jolof et al., 2024), which puts their mental and physical health at risk (Cabrera et al., 2023). In fact, it becomes necessary to create adaptation systems that facilitate the insertion to new cultural norms and challenges (Smokova et al., 2023), as well as organized incorporation mechanisms to decrease the negative impact of traumatic situations (Salazar-Araujo et al., 2019).

Stigmatization in various spheres is a reality for forcibly displaced persons (FDPs). This, together with the violation of fundamental human rights such as housing, education and work, exposes this population to highly vulnerable situations. In fact, it has been observed that displacement experiences and adverse living conditions are associated with indicators of anxiety, post-traumatic stress and depression (Kyaw et al., 2023), which evidences the need to design psychosocial programs that focus on quality of life and well-being. However, despite the fact that women in this situation face a high risk of unemployment, which exacerbates their vulnerability (Garcia et al., 2023), the literature has paid little attention to the internal strategies that these women develop to cope with these adversities.

Forcibly displaced women (FDP) face a series of problems that they manage through coping strategies. These strategies, according to recent literature, are flexible cognitive and

behavioral mechanisms, with adaptive functions, that an individual uses to solve stressful or adverse experiences (Marino et al., 2024). The concept focuses on the management of thoughts, emotions and behavior, and can even be motivational, as they are used to maintain hope and enthusiasm (Tennen & Affleck, 2020). In practice, these strategies are manifested as skills to manage social ties, support networks and interindividual relationships, allowing group structuring, the search for social services and, ultimately, survival (Castañeda-García et al., 2022).

Although abundant literature has addressed the impact of displacement, there is a void of information regarding the coping strategies that women in this situation use specifically in labor settings. Researchers agree that studies on women workers in situations of forced displacement (FDP) are insufficient and point to the need for research that analyzes the contribution of employment to their well-being. To fill this gap, studies need to address psychosocial risk and its relationship with gender issues, as well as coping strategies in the workplace, as recent studies have called for (Morales-Franceschi et al., 2021).

Psychosocial risk is defined as the threat of physical, mental and social harm to employees arising from organizational work conditions and planning (Gil-Monte et al., 2016). Recent literature has shown that these models are insufficient to explain contemporary challenges, highlighting the importance of psychosocial mechanisms such as social support and resilience in vulnerable populations such as people in displacement situations (Castañeda-García et al., 2022). For women in a situation of forced displacement (FDP), the psychosocial risk is particularly relevant, as the basic condition they already have from displacement, which may include anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and depression (Kyaw et al., 2023), is aggravated by the process of acculturation and the problems of adapting to work. Therefore, in these scenarios, coping strategies are crucial for solving problems and dealing with psychosocial risks.

Based on the context and the information gap identified, this research focused on the subregion of Urabá, Colombia, to analyze the coping strategies that women in situations of forced displacement (SDF) use to manage psychosocial risk in their work environment. The study was developed specifically in the agricultural sector of banana farms in the banana axis between August 2022 and December 2023. The question that guided this research was: what are the coping strategies used by forcibly displaced women to manage psychosocial risk in their work environment? To achieve this objective, the first objective was to characterize the physical, mental and social effects that the women experienced as a result of their experience of forced displacement; second, to characterize the psychosocial risk factors that the women perceive in their work environment; and third, to analyze the coping strategies that they use to manage this risk.

## **Method**

This study was based on a qualitative approach under an interpretative paradigm, seeking to understand the meanings and logic that women in a situation of forced displacement attribute to their experiences of psychosocial risk in the work environment. For this purpose, a descriptive phenomenological design was used (Wertz, 2005), which focuses on describing the essence of the experience lived by the participants. This design is particularly relevant to the study because it allows us to analyze the structure of their experiences in order to identify the coping strategies as they are perceived and employed by themselves.

Participants were selected intentionally to ensure that the units of analysis shared a similar profile, which was key to obtaining the necessary depth in their experiences (Wertz, 2005). Inclusion criteria were: 1) being a woman in a situation of forced displacement; 2)

having immigrated from a municipality of origin due to displacement; and 3) being employed in the agricultural sector of banana farms in the Urabá sub-region of Antioquia, Colombia. Thirty women participated, which was sufficient to reach categorical saturation. The participants, aged between 36 and 61, performed various functions on banana farms, including administration, coordination, cartoning, unstuffing, sealing, packing and miscellaneous trades. Their level of schooling was as follows: 53.3% did not complete their basic studies; 23.3% have no studies; 13.3% are professionals; 6.7% completed secondary education; and 3.3% completed basic studies.

The operational regime of this research was carried out in three phases. In the first phase, the research project was socialized to the women who had been previously identified and are SDF. They were invited to participate freely and voluntarily in this process, managing to consolidate a significant group of 30 female employees who work in banana farms in the municipalities of the banana axis of the Urabá Antioqueño sub-region. Subsequently, in the second phase, two meetings were scheduled: one individually to administer the semi-structured interview and another in a group, in order to develop the focus group. Then, in the third phase, the information obtained was analyzed in order to construct the findings.

The interview was chosen to gain an in-depth and detailed understanding of the participants' individual experiences, which is consistent with the phenomenological approach (Wertz, 2005). It was structured around key categories such as the effects of displacement, the influence of displacement on the work environment and coping strategies for managing psychosocial risk.

The focus group was selected in a complementary manner, in order to allow the participants to express their experiences, perceptions and beliefs collectively. The design of the guiding questions was approached from a general perspective to preserve the emotional integrity of the women.

The categories were created with the support of qualitative data analysis software (NVIVO), which facilitates understanding, coding and generating categorical grouping matrices. Due to the conditions of the participants, we worked with two types of coding in order to maintain depth and theoretical foundation. Keeping in mind the need to meet the specific objectives, two sub-phases were developed. The first was the performance of open coding, which consisted of reviewing 30 case transcripts in order to classify the sequence of the units of meanings; in that sense, it allows the identification of patterns that are repeated in such a way that they could be conceptualized, which allowed categorization (Flick, 2015). Afterwards, axial coding was performed with the intention of relating the emerging categories to the categories, thus allowing the explanation of the results in relation to the categorical construction (Flick, 2015). Qualitative data analysis was performed with the support of NVivo software. The process was based on the thematic analysis approach to identify recurring patterns in the participants' narratives. In line with the research objectives and to ensure depth and theoretical grounding, it was developed in two main sub-phases (Flick, 2015).

## Results

Clear presentation of the results obtained. Table 1 shows the axial coding in relation to the category and emerging categories. It is found that forced displacement impacted women in a multidimensional way; one immediate emotion that stands out is fear, as stated by MC4 (sealer, 38 years old): "*[...] very afraid because we were coming to a foreign land, we did not know where we were, I was very afraid*" (personal communication, May 26, 2023). Fear is an emotion that appears to alert about situations of risk and threat to integrity; consequently, it gives rise to the emergence of the category constant displacement due to the perception of danger, as described by MT2 (packer, 46 years old): "*I had to move from*

house to house fleeing because I thought they were going to kill me. That affected me a lot, I could not be calm" (personal communication, May 23, 2023). At the same time, they experienced the phenomenon of forced disappearance due to the loss of people with whom they had emotional, fraternal and friendly ties. An example of this is the story: "Many relatives, friends and cousins disappeared them, we didn't realize where they were left" (MC4, sealer, 38 years old, personal communication, May 26, 2023). This leads to the reinforcement, for these women, of feelings of loss to the extent that they experienced grief, understanding that this arises as a response to any type of grief. This is affirmed by the case of MA6 (packer, 46 years old): "Detaching myself from all my material goods, my house, my cat, my dog, my cattle, it hurt me to have to leave not only my friends abandoned, but also my goods" (personal communication, May 24, 2023).

With respect to the loss of formal support networks, Table 1 summarizes the negative impacts in terms of social relations; in other words, it describes an institutional breakdown. The loss of formal networks implies, in this group of participants, a break with state entities, especially those dedicated to the protection of the family, children and adolescents, as well as educational institutions. These entities have specialized people who supported the participants, as well as their families; they are referents in terms of contributions in the development of quality of life and the restoration or provider of rights. For example, MA1 (Cardboarder, 42 years old) states: "My three children were in an ICBF program that gave them resources, which helped a lot [...]" (Personal communication, May 24, 2023). Regarding the loss of educational institutions, MA5 (various trades, 46 years old) gives an account of the experience relating: "I had my children studying and I had to flee with them; it is something that affects me. I had to come to the Urabá area to start over and look for new ways to help" (Personal communication, May 24, 2023).

With reference to the impact on informal networks, understanding these as the rupture of the link due to forced immigration, the connections established with relatives, friends and neighbors with whom there is an exchange to cover needs of various kinds are deconstructed. Table 1 relates a qualitative variable that emerges and that is family disintegration. The women in a situation of displacement who were studied reported having experienced this type of loss; this is the case of MA2 (Selector, 56 years old), who describes: "Many family members moved to other places and not much was heard from them again. I counted on them, they helped me, they gave me advice" (Personal communication, May 24, 2023). Likewise, friendly circles are destructured, as this account states: "Many of my friends died, others got into the war forced and others because they wanted to, but many died" (MA7, packer, 41 years old, personal communication, May 24, 2023).

Another point is that Table 1 shows the relationship of feelings and emotions generated as a result of forced displacement with four emerging categories. Thus, the participants have difficulty in expressing and naming emotions and feelings, as they state: "It is very hard because it not only affects you psychologically, but it also affects you emotionally, I don't know how to tell you" (MT 10, desmanadora, 49 years old, personal communication, May 12, 2023). Nervousness, understood as an emotion that generates uneasiness, was expressed by MA2 (selector, 56 years old): "I felt strange because the truth is a bit of an abrupt change; even though I came to a family home, things didn't become so easy. I was nervous, I was not calm" (personal communication, May 26, 2023). Likewise, fear was also a consequence of an impression of danger, as narrated by MC3 (packer, 57 years old): "It was a very tough situation, very difficult, my biggest fear is that such a situation will happen again. What hurt me the most about this whole situation of displacement and it hurts me that it has affected my family" (personal communication, May 26, 2023).

**Table 1**

*The effects of displacement*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Emerging category</b>	<b>Sequence</b>
<b>Short-term impacts</b>	Fear/fear	11 of 30 cases
	Constant displacement	7 of 30 cases
	Enforced disappearance	6 of 30 cases
	Sense of loss	4 of 30 cases
<b>Loss of formal support networks</b>	State entity/comprehensive protection of the family, children and adolescents	21 of 30 cases
	Educational Institutions	20 of 30 cases
<b>Impacts on informal networks</b>	Family disintegration	19 of 30 cases
	Destructuring of friendly circles	19 of 30 cases
<b>Feelings and emotions generated</b>	Difficulty in naming emotions/feelings	12 of 30 cases
	Nervousness	7 of 30 cases
	Fear	6 of 30 cases
	Sadness	3 of 30 cases

*Note.* Own elaboration.

According to the axial coding shown in Table 2, there are links between the influence that the participants had, from their condition of forced displacement, and the impacts that this can generate in the agricultural labor scenario in which the participants are immersed. In fact, one category that emerged was the perception of discrimination that most of the women had upon joining the company. This led to a risk of revictimization due to the fact that they consider that it was as a result of the immigration status. This is stated in the following account:

They called me guerrillera, they called me nicknames, by the men, and when they shouted guerrillera at me I felt like a dagger in my chest, because they made me remember what those people were, who took my family away from me, and being compared to them offended me (MT3, farm administrator, 55 years old). Personal communication, May 12, 2023)

Similarly, there were experiences of economic violence in the labor setting, since they mentioned that when they started working they did so for a lower salary. They had the image that this was the result of situations of gender inequality, even though they performed the same tasks as men. There was also psychological violence, as they reported verbal aggression and/or harassment. An example of this is this description: "Yes, not only because of that, but also because I was a woman, they paid me less and because I am very strong, some men looked at me badly or insulted me" (MC8, sealer, 47 years old, personal communication, May 9, 2023).

**Table 2**

*Influence of displacement on the agricultural labor scenario*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Emerging category</b>	<b>Sequence</b>
<b>Influence of displacement on labor linkage</b>	Perception of discrimination	19 of 30 cases
	Experience of gender violence	15 of 30 cases
	None - Adequate work environment	10 of 30 cases
	None for proper use of the auto-schemes	9 of 30 cases

Note. Own elaboration.

Table 2 also contains qualitative variables indicating that there was no impact for two reasons. Firstly, the work climate was perceived as adequate, and this meant that the presumption on the part of the participants was that there was a good working environment, cooperation and acceptance among the work teams. As indicated in this answer: "I was welcomed well, helped by men and women. They helped me, so I think that my displaced status did not influence me at all" (MA3, packer, 56 years old, personal communication, May 5, 2023). Second, there were no sequelae, given that there were participants who possibly had adequate development of self-schemas, i.e., ideas regarding themselves fostered incorporation and adaptation due to the commensurate articulation between self-esteem, self-concept, and self-image. This is how this story perceives it: "I showed them that I was and am a berraca, I showed them that everything they put me to do I did well, that I knew how to work and that I earned my money with dedication and love" (MC2, packer, 40 years old, personal communication, May 10, 2023).

It is necessary to emphasize that the participants report coping strategies that are aimed at managing situations that involve occupational risk, such as, for example, situations of discrimination in the workplace and salary conditions. This means that Table 3 shows the axial coding that shows the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic coping strategies of the participants with some emerging categories. First, it is identified that the coping strategies focused on problems are interlocutory, that is, they favor dialogue as a

mechanism to resolve difficult situations in the face of a situation that generates tension and work stress or unpleasant emotions; this is the case of MA4 (packer, 59 years old):

With dialogue I would talk and, if the other person was upset, I would not talk; I would wait for him to get over his anger and then, calmly or the next day, I would tell him: Man, you're right, excuse me, I had the mistake or you had the mistake, but I was catching the person when he was already calm so as not to continue with the fight. This greatly reduced the problem (personal communication, June 2, 2023).

It should be said that a category corresponding to agency emerges; according to the testimonies, it is highlighted that there are skills to direct actions in order to achieve purposes, goals or even solve problems that threaten the welfare of displaced women. They participated in the present study, as MC6 (farm manager, 40 years old): *"I know there are different entities that can help me with all the issues. I have also addressed labor issues that get out of control and I cannot solve them"* (personal communication, April 28, 2023).

Then, Table 3 shows the relationship between coping strategies focused on emotion, understood from the point of view of the management of those work events that cause discomfort, states of distress, stress, among others. It is noteworthy that the category faith in God emerges; this means that they turn to the religious belief in a supreme being to give them the strength to regulate and manage their emotions, as MC4 (sealer, 38 years old) points out: *"Strength in God, because sometimes it was even easier to try to hide those feelings, because there was a lot of commotion, pain, sadness, disappointment, something terrible, because the situation was not easy, but thanks to God we were able to cope"* (personal communication, May 26, 2023). In turn, the qualitative variable expression of emotions and feelings arises as a conflict resolution strategy. The participants perceive that it is functional to express feelings to make clear what they feel about situations that demand work stress, but they emphasize that this should be done with the presence of administrative areas that have the competence to mediate and manage events that may exacerbate the problem, according to MA4 (packer, 59 years old):

The best strategy for dealing with difficulties is to dialogue about what you feel, but the dialogue must have the support and help of the administrative part, because otherwise more difficulties and problems may arise. I, therefore, turn to the administrative side (personal communication, May 24, 2023).

Next, Table 3, through axial coding, relates coping strategies for managing maladaptive thoughts to emerging categories involving activity change and thought restructuring. In other words, the ideas or representations held about an event are negative; therefore, they give rise to human error in the activities performed by these displaced employees. The participants stated that they were able to manage it by changing jobs; this is the case of MT1 (bargirl, 37 years old):

What the company did was to help me, I remembered what happened and the son that killed me, I started to have ideas in my head and it made it difficult for me to do my job. The manager gave me permission and moved me to another job, as a cartonera, so that I would be busier. That helped me (personal communication, May 23, 2023).

Along the lines of managing maladaptive thoughts, the participants have also worked on restructuring thoughts. This means that they modify ideas for others that reduce levels of discomfort and promote adaptation. A sample of this is supported by this statement from MA3 (packer, 56 years old):

When difficulties arose, I believed that the problem was mine and I was angry with people. But I was trying to think of something else and I don't know how to try to see things easier to give them a solution to the problem. That put me at ease (Personal communication, May 24, 2023)

Next, Table 3 indicates the correspondence between the coping strategies focused on the search for informal support networks as a response to work situations and conditions that imply psychosocial risk for the participants, because it implies for them imbalance, revictimization or the affectation of psychological areas. The women in a situation of displacement who were studied stated that they coped with complex situations by seeking family support, as shown in this account: *"Normally all I do when there is some difficulty at work is comment on it at home, in front of my siblings, and it frees me from negative things that take away my peace of mind"* (MA2, Selectorá, 56 years old. Personal communication, May 30, 2023).

The coping strategy focused on seeking formal support networks is also a resource shown in Table 3 both as an ability shown by participants to activate external institutional support networks that guide, restore and/or are overseers of rights. Immigrant women turn to three institutions that, in their opinion, are useful in resolving their labor disputes. In the first place, they provide the basis for generating the category of labor ministry. The Colombian entity that guarantees workers' rights controls and monitors companies with respect to labor conditions, as shown in the following account:

If you have a problem with a teammate, complain to the field coordinator. If he is not capable, then he will tell the administrator. If the administrator is not capable, we go to the workers' committee or to the union and they will help us there. And if they can't, then we go to the Ministry, the Ministry helps us and does what they have to do (MA3, personal communication, May 5, 2023).

Secondly, they make unions visible as a source that solves problems that can cause social damage, organization or management, taking into account that workers' associations are also guarantors of economic and labor rights, as this story shows: *"I know the banana union, I know they are representing us and have helped solve problems we have had"* (MC7, personal communication, April 28, 2023). Thirdly, the immigrant women considered that the unit for attention and integral reparation to victims is an entity that has listened to them in the territory with counseling, listening and support as stated by this participant: *"Victim office, I know there is a victim office, I have gone and they have listened to me, advised me, helped me with problems with the farm and the house"* (MC2, packer, 40 years old, personal communication, May 10, 2023).

**Table 3**

*Multidimensional coping strategies*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Emerging category</b>	<b>Sequence</b>
<b>Focused on the problem</b>	Contact	15 of 30 cases
	Agency	5 of 30 cases
<b>Focused on emotion</b>	Faith in God	18 of 30 cases
	Expression of emotions and feelings to the human	10 of 30 cases

	management area	
<b>Management of maladaptive thoughts</b>	Change of work	19 of 30 cases
	Restructuring of thinking	9 of 30 cases
<b>Focused on the search for informal support networks</b>	Search for family support	20 of 30 cases
	Unions	17 of 30 cases
<b>Focused on the search for formal support networks</b>	Entities for the integral protection of victims	14 of 30 cases
	Ministry of Labor	10 of 30 cases

Note. Own elaboration.

### Discussion and conclusions (14 points)

It should be noted that the women in a situation of forced displacement (SDF) who participated in this study experienced short-term affectations that impacted their quality of life, insofar as they have emotional sequelae and rupture of formal and informal support networks (Owuor et al., 2023). Consistent with this finding, authors Benzaken et al. (2023) state that relocation to a stressful environment creates an eminent risk of mental health problems. This is evident in women in the banana labor context, who experience great insecurity in the face of new social, economic, family, work and gender challenges, which can be emotionally difficult. In fact, the findings suggest that, upon entering the world of work, women already have intrinsic indicators that alert them to the onset of psychological distress, which is exacerbated when they are exposed to stressful situations. In this sense, and in line with Crispin et al. (2023), it can be inferred that work settings, especially the organizational climate, influence the increase of mental health problems in these women.

Consistent with the above, and in the context of their situation as displaced women, the findings of this study show that women who are employed informally in agricultural production scenarios in the rural sector perceive a high risk of experiencing violence from their male and female colleagues, a problem that is exacerbated in an inadequate work environment (Morales-Franceschi et al., 2021). Participants reported being discriminated against and experiencing

gender-based violence. These facts are factors that allude to psychosocial risk and a high level of occupational stress (Seguin et al., 2017).

The authors Rapisarda et al. (2024) state that there are components of the organizational climate and individual aspects, such as coping styles and psychosocial resources, that are related to psychological distress or mental health impairment. These same authors emphasize the importance of psychological diagnoses to foresee possible impacts on performance, sick leave, functioning and group dynamics, among other aspects of working conditions.

The coping strategies of women in SDF working in agricultural production settings can be considered to have a multidimensional approach. The multidimensional refers to the variety of functional strategies they use to cope with the demands of working conditions and aspects of the organizational climate that they perceive as discriminatory or permeated by gender-based violence, due to the complexity of the dynamics that are considered a trigger of work-related stress. The coping resources they identified are focused on problem solving (dialogue and agency), emotion management (expression of emotions and faith in God), and management of maladaptive thoughts (thought restructuring). These strategies are consistent with the notion of "psychological capital" that promotes adaptation and job performance (Chen et al., 2024), and are aligned with studies that point to the importance of internal beliefs in finding strength and security in the face of difficult situations (Grieshop et al., 1996) and the development of self-management and conflict management skills (Goleman, 2002). The restructuring of thoughts helped them to modify maladaptive ideas and change their perceptions of the organizational climate (Köbler et al., 2024).

Finally, the search for support networks was presented as a fundamental strategy. Participants relied on both informal networks, such as family support, and formal networks, including trade unions, the Ministry of Labor and victim assistance agencies. These resources, which are consistent with studies on resilience, where social support acts as a protective factor in the face of stressful life events (González Lugo et al., 2018), are essential for coping with psychosocial risks and protecting mental health (Seff et al., 2024).

### **Acknowledgments**

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the study participants for their valuable collaboration and generosity in sharing their experiences. They also acknowledge the Regional Research Ethics Committee of UNIMINUTO Rectoría Antioquia - Chocó for its rigor and ethical endorsement of the project (Reference CB22-07).

### **Conflict of interest**

No conflict of interest is declared in connection with the publication of this article.

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**GENDER AND LEADERSHIP STYLES. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS IN THE PUBLIC HIGH MANAGEMENT SYSTEM OF THE MAGALLANES AND CHILEAN ANTARCTIC REGION.**

**Género y estilos de liderazgo. Un análisis comparativo en el Sistema de Alta Dirección Pública de la región de Magallanes y la Antártica Chilena**

**Elizabeth Aránguiz Rivera**

Universidad Internacional Iberoamericana (Chile)

([ear.dif@gmail.com](mailto:ear.dif@gmail.com)) (<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7942-3250>)

**Elizabeth Caro Montero**

Universidad Europea del Atlántico (Spain)

([elizabeth.caro@uneatlantico.es](mailto:elizabeth.caro@uneatlantico.es)) (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4516-2495>)

**Manuscript information:**

**Recibido/Received:** 02/10/25

**Revisado/Reviewed:** April 4, 2026

**Aceptado/Accepted:** April 6, 2026

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**ABSTRACT**

**Keywords:**

Gender perspective and equity; High Public Management System in Chile; management styles and transformational leadership.

This research topic arises from a problem that has been discussed within the public policies of the Chilean State; initiatives for equality, as well as the expansion of opportunities and socioeconomic changes in relation to gender, have contributed to increasing the number of women actively present in all areas of development in society. Despite this, there is still a long way to go to achieve parity in public and/or private institutions and organizations. The main objective of this research was to comparatively analyze leadership styles from a gender perspective developed by men and women who have been selected by the Public Senior Management System for executive positions in the Magallanes and Chilean Antarctic region during the years 2022-2023.

The methodology was mixed, and five instruments were complemented: Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5S) and In-Depth Interview, both for Directors and Subordinates, and Document Review of the Performance Agreements. The data analysis technique carried out was recurrent triangulation. The innovative contribution of this research was to show that gender can explain 27.15% of the variation in leadership style in this sample, meaning that 72% of the factors influencing leadership are beyond gender.

In conclusion of the research, it seems that there is only a tendency for the association between the type of leadership and gender. Additionally, recommendations and proposals for concrete improvement actions for the SADP are made.

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## RESUMEN

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**Palabras clave:**

perspectiva y equidad de género; Sistema de Alta Dirección Pública en Chile; estilos directivos y liderazgo transformacional.

Este tema de investigación nace de una problemática que ha sido discutida dentro de las políticas públicas del Estado chileno, las iniciativas de igualdad, así como la expansión de oportunidades y los cambios socioeconómicos en relación al género, han contribuido a aumentar el número de mujeres presentes en todos los ámbitos del desarrollo de forma activa en la sociedad, pese a ello aún queda camino que recorrer para lograr la paridad en las instituciones y/u organizaciones públicas y privadas.

El objetivo principal de esta investigación fue analizar comparativamente los estilos de liderazgo desde el enfoque de género que desarrollan hombres y mujeres que han sido elegidos por el Sistema de Alta Dirección Pública en cargos directivos de la región de Magallanes y la Antártica Chilena durante los años 2022-2023.

La metodología fue mixta y se complementaron cinco instrumentos: Cuestionario de Liderazgo Multifactorial (MLQ-5S) y Entrevista de Profundidad ambos para Director (a) y Subordinados (as) y Revisión documental de los Convenios de Desempeño. Las técnicas de análisis de datos que se llevó a cabo fue triangulación recurrente.

Los aportes innovadores en esta investigación fue demostrar que el sexo puede explicar el 27,15% de la variación del tipo de liderazgo en esta muestra, por lo cual hay 72% de factores que influyen en el liderazgo aparte del sexo. Como conclusión de la investigación al parecer sólo existe una tendencia de la asociación del tipo de liderazgo con el sexo. Además, se realizan recomendaciones y propuestas de acciones concretas de mejoramiento al SADP.

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## **Introduction**

Today, gender equality remains a major topic of debate in our society. The gender pay gap, initiatives to increase women's representation in positions of power, violence against women, fertility rates, work-life balance, the feminization of caregiving, and women's use of public spaces have become central topics of both specialized analysis and public debate.

After many years of advocacy for equal representation of women and men in leadership positions, the question arises as to whether the current situation is conducive to these changes or not. This study will examine the leadership styles of women and men in a specific workplace context and how these styles have evolved in recent years, particularly within management bodies.

Leadership involves developing a vision, gaining the support of individuals for specific strategies, and delegating authority to them so that the vision can be realized (Kotter 1988).

Men and women differ in their access to leadership positions. This is reflected in the fact that one of the most striking inequalities present in most Western societies is the lower representation of women in leadership positions across various fields and organizations (Cuadrado, 2004).

This concept of leadership is subject to constant analysis and evolution; for example, today there is much discussion about women's leadership or female leadership. The scientific evidence available on this subject is grounded in psychological, philosophical, political, sociological, religious, anthropological, and biological perspectives. Even so, women's leadership remains a concept shrouded in unresolved prejudices and stereotypes.

According to Blackmore (2013), women's leadership is linked to collective experiences of emotionality and seeks social justice, a characteristic that aligns it with distributed leadership. It has been noted that women tend to lead from an "ethic of care," strengthening relationships within communities and seeking to avoid the problems inherent in the distribution of power (Gilligan, 2013; Tronto, 2018). Building on this idea, women's leadership has been described as people-centered (Esser, 2018), based on dialogue and communication—an approach that is viewed as positive and necessary (Popescu and Gunter, 2011).

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2020 (Schwab, 2020), 108 of the 149 countries included have improved their overall scores, driven primarily by a significant increase in the number of women in parliament compared to the previous assessment.

In particular, in some countries, such as Latvia, Spain, and Thailand, the number of women in parliament has increased substantially. However, to date, only 25% of these 35,127 seats worldwide are held by women, and only 21% of the 3,343 ministers are women; in some countries, women are not represented at all.

On the other hand, over the past 50 years, 85 of the 153 countries covered by this report have never had a female head of state. However, within our region, three countries (Argentina, Peru, and Chile) are still only halfway toward achieving gender parity in this area.

The World Economic Forum has drawn attention to this paradox, warning that countries such as Chile are not achieving an optimal return on their investment in women's education due to cultural, structural, and labor-market factors. Since 2012, this has prompted institutions and companies to implement gender parity initiatives in Turkey, Japan, South Korea, and Mexico. In addition, in 2016, the Forum

and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) formed a partnership to implement the initiative in Chile—the first of its kind in South America—with a view to expanding it throughout the region.

The Senior Public Management System (hereinafter SADP) is the agency responsible for selecting senior management positions in the public administration. This system fills 1,634 positions in public institutions or agencies. The mission of this institution is “to strengthen the civil service and contribute to the modernization of the government through the implementation of management and development policies aimed at fostering a workforce and leadership that is competent, motivated, empathetic, diverse, ethical, and innovative.”

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of female candidates for various government positions, although a significant gap still exists. Currently, only 29% of applicants for ADP positions are women, while 71% are men. However, 36% of the appointments are women and 64% are men.

Given the background outlined above, this study aims to analyze the leadership styles exhibited by men and women in executive positions elected by SADP in the Magallanes and Chilean Antarctic region during the years 2022–2023, comparing them from a gender-based perspective.

With regard to access to this comparative analysis and its findings, we hope to provide the SADP with a set of recommendations that will help improve processes ranging from the selection to the appointment of senior executives.

The research methodology adopted a mixed-methods approach, since, given its subject matter and nature, it was deemed appropriate to use both qualitative and quantitative techniques for data collection and subsequent analysis, as the aim was to study the implications of gender differences in the adoption of leadership styles by men and women.

Similarly, a concurrent triangulation design was implemented, which aims to confirm or corroborate results and cross-validate quantitative and qualitative data.

Four instruments were used: statistical analysis of the MLQ-5x questionnaire for regional directors and subordinates, and categorical analysis of the in-depth interviews.

The study population consisted of regional directors elected by the SADP in the Magallanes and Chilean Antarctic region; the sample included 29 regional directors, comprising 17 men and 12 women. This sample was purposive rather than probabilistic, as all subjects currently serving in their positions were selected. In addition, inclusion and exclusion criteria were established for subordinates.

## Method

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, defined as the “systematic integration of quantitative and qualitative methods within a single study in order to obtain a ‘more complete picture of the phenomenon’” (Chen, 2006, cited in Hernández et al., 2014, p. 534).

Of all the mixed-methods approaches listed by Hernández (2018, p. 615), the following were key factors in the researcher’s decision to choose this approach, as we perceive it to be more comprehensive, complete, and holistic (Newman, 2002); it produces “richer” and more varied data by considering diverse sources and types

of data, contexts or environments, and analyses (Bazeley, 2018); it provides stronger support for scientific inferences than when used in isolation (Fever, Towne, & Shavelson, 2002) and allows for better “exploration and exploitation” of the data (Johnson & Schoonenboom, 2015).

### ***Design***

A design consistent with a mixed-methods approach was chosen: concurrent triangulation (Creswell, 2013). Quantitative and qualitative data on the research problem were collected and analyzed simultaneously and in parallel over the same time period, so that, once the analysis and interpretation were complete, a more holistic view of the phenomenon under study could be obtained.

Finally, it is important to note that the study was exploratory and descriptive in nature due to the sample size.

### ***Hypothesis***

H1: “The leadership styles that men and women in leadership positions develop  
“Managers find themselves constrained by gender differences.”

H0: “The leadership styles developed by men and women in leadership positions  
“Managers are not influenced by gender differences.”

### ***Population and Sample***

The study population consisted of all regional directors elected by the SADP in the Magallanes and Chilean Antarctic Region, who participated as research subjects. Consequently, the sample consisted of 29 participants, including 17 men and 12 women.

This sample was purposive rather than probabilistic, as it included all principals currently serving in their positions in this region.

The criteria used for subordinates were:

Inclusion:

1. that they were in office.
2. They expressed interest in participating in the study.
3. At least 2 years of experience in this position.
4. That they be part of the directors' staff in the region.

Exclusion:

1. That they were not performing their duties.
2. They did not express any interest in participating in the study.

### ***Variables***

The variables are presented in relation to the MLQ-5x questionnaire, which is structured as a hierarchical model with nine variables, which were analyzed using a quantitative approach.

### **Table 1**

*Hierarchical model of variables.*

First-Order Variable	Second-Order Variable	Variable Scales	Acronyms
<b>Transformational Leadership</b>	1. Charisma/Inspirational.	1. Charisma: 1.1. Attributed Idealized Influence. 1.2. Idealized Behavioral Influence.	I(A) II(C)
	2. Intellectual Stimulation.	2. Inspirational Motivation. 3. Intellectual Stimulation.	MY EI
	3. Individualized Consideration.	4. Individualized Consideration.	C I
<b>Leadership Development/Transactional</b>	4. Contingent Reward.	5. Contingent Reward.	R C
	5. Active Exception Handling.	6. Active Exception Handling.	D PEA
<b>Corrective/Avoidant Leadership</b>	6. Passive/Avoidant Leadership	7. Passive Exception Handling.	D PEP
		8. Laissez-faire.	LF

Note: Source: Bass and Avolio, 1994.

**Research Tools**

*Multifactorial Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X, short form) for Regional Directors and Subordinates*

The administration and processing of this questionnaire are part of the quantitative approach within the mixed-methods framework.

The information obtained during the analysis did not support the research hypothesis.

It is a tool developed by Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 2000); it currently consists of a scale with 45 items that measure multiple variables.

It has been adapted to the Chilean organizational context, featuring new items and demonstrating psychometric properties in terms of discriminant validity, reliability, and validity evidence. This adaptation was included in an undergraduate thesis from the Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Sciences at the University of Chile (Vega and Zabala, 2004).

Overall, the results reported in the Chilean adaptation study of the short 5-item MLQ show:

- High internal reliability of the instrument ( $\alpha = 0.97$ )
- High content validity based on expert judgment
- A correlational structure consistent with the theoretical model
- Significant relationships between transformational leadership and organizational outcomes.

This background supports the validity and reliability of the instrument for use in organizational research in the Chilean context.

*In-Depth Interview for Managers and/or Subordinates*

It is important to note that this instrument was administered and analyzed using a qualitative approach.

The qualitative saturation criterion was not applied, and only those who voluntarily chose to participate were interviewed. The survey was administered to 4 directors and 4 subordinates (2 men and 2 women in each group) from the following 4 institutions: Local Public Education Service; Health Service; National Board of Kindergartens; and Ministry of Education.

Both instruments were reviewed and validated through expert judgment, in accordance with the objectives of the interview and the internal consistency of the instrument.

This instrument was used to describe the way in which the report examines gender leadership, the barriers to it, and the differences between men and women who lead public institutions. It also shed light on the influence of gender stereotypes on leadership within ADP.

#### *Document Review of the SADP Performance Agreements (PAs)*

It is a management tool that guides public officials in meeting the challenges of their positions; it establishes strategic management objectives against which they will be evaluated annually and at the end of their term of office. This facilitates effective and transparent accountability to the relevant minister or senior agency head, as well as to the public.

We reviewed 29 CDs from the executives who participated in this study and who set goals related to leadership and/or gender.

#### **Data Analysis Plan**

a) Presentation of quantitative results: The data obtained from the leadership styles questionnaire were numerically coded on a scale of 1 to 5. The data were then organized into tables, grouped, and entered into the descriptive and inferential statistical software SPSS (v. 19).

Next, the variables were correlated, with both descriptive (means, frequencies) and inferential (correlations, regressions, hypothesis tests) analyses conducted, taking into account whether or not the research hypothesis was met.

b) Presentation of qualitative results: The data were transcribed into written text in Word format, and the information was organized for analysis. The Atlas Ti V25 software for Windows was used to extract units of meaning. They were organized into relevant categories, described, and illustrated with corresponding examples. The categories of analysis, subcategories, and information were organized into a descriptive matrix.

c) Concurrent triangulation allowed us to compare and correlate the results of both approaches. This integration provided a more comprehensive, enriched, and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study, and also made it possible to identify points of convergence (triangulation) or divergence (complementarity).

The discussion addressed the researcher's interpretation, the findings, and the implications of the results for future studies.

## **Results**

### ***Analysis and Discussion of the Quantitative Results.***

*A Comparative Analysis of Leadership Style and Gender.*

The results of the cross-tabulation of the variables "leadership style" and "gender" indicated that there is no statistically significant association between leadership style and gender ( $p > 0.05$ ) among the individuals analyzed.

This suggests that, in the sample studied, both men and women tended to exhibit similar leadership styles, which could indicate a consistency in leadership approaches regardless of gender.

In addition, the results showed that transformational leadership is the dominant style among both men and women, far surpassing transactional leadership. This trend is consistent with the scholarly literature, which highlights transformational leadership as an approach focused on innovation, intrinsic motivation, and the building of strong interpersonal relationships. For its part, the low prevalence of transactional leadership could be associated with less emphasis on strict supervision and external rewards within the contexts evaluated.

Regarding the research hypothesis I mentioned: "The leadership styles developed by men and women in management positions are influenced by gender differences." This would not hold true, since, although no significant differences were found between leadership styles and sex, it is important to note that sex and gender are distinct concepts.

**Table 2**  
*Contingency Coefficient Result*

	Test	Value	Approximate meaning	Exact meaning
Nominal to Nominal	Contingency coefficient	0.271	0.137	0.273
	Number of valid cases	29		

We can note that the contingency coefficient was not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that gender statistically explains 27.1% of the variability in leadership style; this finding is a key result of the study.

Although this figure was initially considered low based on a statistical analysis, given the many other variables that influence this choice, it can be inferred that gender accounts for nearly 30%. Therefore, there is a set of variables and factors that have not been studied and that could statistically explain the choice of leadership style in 72.9% of cases.

In interpreting the results, we can note that certain trends were identified, that no women exhibited transactional leadership, and that neither men nor women exhibited laissez-faire leadership. These trends, given the small sample size ( $n=29$ ), were not sufficient to yield conclusive results or to generalize them to the broader population; however, they were sufficient to characterize this group of managers, thereby fulfilling the stated objectives and scope.

**Analysis and Discussion of the Qualitative Results**

The analysis and discussion of the results derived from the qualitative approach presented here complement the previous guidelines with a view to providing a more accurate characterization of the leadership styles of SADP executives.

It should be noted that both qualitative instruments were reviewed and validated through expert judgment, in accordance with the objectives of the interview and the internal consistency of the instrument.

By analyzing the data collected through in-depth interviews with both managers and subordinates, this study describes how they perceive gender-based leadership, the barriers to it, and the differences between men and women who lead public institutions in the region between 2022 and 2023.

#### *Transcript of the interview*

A verbatim and detailed transcript was prepared of the 8 interviews conducted. The data were transcribed into written text in Word format, and the information was organized for analysis. To extract units of meaning, we used Atlas Ti, V25 for Windows, and organized them into categories of analysis and subcategories. In which the corresponding units of measurement were described and illustrated. The data was then organized into a descriptive matrix. We then conducted a critical and reflective analysis in which the findings were linked to the theoretical framework and the study's objectives, following the logic of systematic qualitative analysis (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014).

Categorization can be inductive (emerging from the data) or deductive (based on a theoretical framework), thereby ensuring the validity of the analysis and consistency between the data and the categories.

#### *Interpretation of the categories from the in-depth interview.*

An analysis of the interviews conducted revealed three key categories that reflect the perceptions and experiences of managers and subordinates regarding the leadership exercised within the SADP framework.

The following is an interpretation derived from the analysis of these three categories in the context of the research objectives.

#### *Category 1: Ways in which gender barriers to accessing leadership positions in the SADP are perceived*

There was a general consensus that the system has become more transparent and merit-based than it was in the past. However, it was acknowledged that in previous periods, biases were more evident, particularly at the regional level. This cultural shift was interpreted as a step toward equal opportunity, in line with the observations of Northouse (2018), who emphasizes that meritocratic practices reinforce the perception of fairness within organizations.

The interviewees noted that there are currently institutional guidelines and public policies aimed at gender equality, which represents significant progress. This testimony reinforces the argument put forward by Eagly and Carli (2007), who contend that the visibility of women in senior leadership positions serves as a

positive role model that promotes the inclusion and recognition of women in leadership roles.

Consequently, the findings suggest that meritocracy and transparency in selection processes have reduced perceived gender barriers, while inclusive leadership exercised by women is a key factor in legitimizing equality.

However, they noted across the board that women tend to apply for these positions to a lesser extent, which constitutes an indirect and persistent barrier. These challenges are often not recognized as discrimination, but they directly affect women's opportunities for promotion. The following testimony from a principal is presented: *"Today, the opportunities are much greater than they were 10 years ago... The system seems to be based on personal merit, which gives me some peace of mind. Although I have to say that, among those three candidates, I was the only woman, and that made me feel, in a way, isolated."*

Thus, while a cultural shift toward openness and equity has been acknowledged, the historical trend of male dominance in leadership positions continues to set a pattern that is difficult to reverse.

### *Category 2: The Influence of Gender Stereotypes on ADP Leadership.*

A tension was observed between downplaying and emphasizing these stereotypes. While male executives tended to downplay their importance, both female executives and subordinates acknowledged that certain attributes traditionally associated with femininity—such as empathy, approachability, and the ability to build trust—are indeed evident in leadership and are also viewed positively within work teams.

According to Eagly and Johnson (1990), these types of traits are associated with transformational leadership, in which a relational style and concern for people directly influence team motivation and commitment.

Thus, while stereotypes do not disappear from social perception, they are nuanced by the importance placed on institutional outcomes and are reframed as characteristics that contribute to women's leadership.

Here is a testimonial from a manager: *"Stereotypes... yes, they can influence leadership styles. But, in the end, what really matters is the achievement of institutional goals."*

This view is consistent with the findings of Bass and Riggio (2006), who emphasize that in public management systems, objective outcomes are the primary measure of effectiveness, rather than the individual characteristics of the leader.

### *Category 3: Differences in ADP leadership styles between men and women.*

A discrepancy was found between the perceptions of managers and subordinates. On the one hand, men in leadership positions argued that leadership styles do not depend on gender, but rather on the organizational context and career path. This idea is consistent with the views of Yukl (2013), who emphasizes that leadership styles are shaped by past experiences, individual values, and cultural dynamics.

On the other hand, both female managers and their subordinates clearly identified gender differences in leadership practices. In this regard, female

leadership is described as collaborative, participatory, and flexible, characterized by approachability and empathy in workplace relationships.

A directive states: *"I embrace my feminine leadership style... empathetic, loving, and sometimes maternal... which means being close to the staff"*. This quote reflects an acceptance and appreciation of the attributes traditionally associated with women—such as empathy, love, and motherhood—in the exercise of leadership. It highlights how these qualities contribute to a close relationship with staff.

On the other hand, male leadership was portrayed as more distant, authoritarian, and task-oriented, with less openness to team participation.

This perception is consistent with the findings of Eagly and Carli (2007), who note that female leaders tend to foster more inclusive and participatory leadership styles, while men more often adopt transactional and top-down approaches.

Similarly, Bass and Riggio (2006) note that transformational leadership, which is more common among women, contributes significantly to group cohesion and organizational commitment.

Overall, the findings suggest that, while the SADP is perceived as a more inclusive and equitable space, structural and cultural factors that limit full gender equality persist.

A comparison of the four institutions revealed both commonalities and significant differences regarding gender barriers, the influence of stereotypes, and leadership styles.

With regard to gender barriers, there was agreement that the SADP is perceived as more transparent and meritocratic than in the past.

However, while some executives—particularly men—argued that there are no explicit restrictions, female executives and their subordinates acknowledged that the low number of female applicants remains a persistent obstacle, reflecting the fact that formal equality has not yet fully translated into equal access.

With regard to gender stereotypes, there was a clear divergence in perceptions. Male executives tend to downplay their influence, attributing leadership to individual merit or the institutional context.

In contrast, female managers and their subordinates viewed attributes traditionally associated with femininity—such as empathy, approachability, and the ability to listen—in a positive light, interpreting them as strengths that foster cohesion and a positive organizational climate.

This difference is confirmed by subordinates, who noted that female leaders had a warm and approachable style, in contrast to the more authoritarian and hierarchical approach of male managers.

In summary, the results showed that, although the SADP is making progress in terms of meritocracy and formal gender parity, cultural and gender gaps persist and are reflected in leadership dynamics.

## **Presentation of the Main Results Derived from Concurrent Triangulation**

### *Category 1: Leadership Styles (Transformational vs. (Transactional)*

Analyzing this category made it possible to distinguish leadership practices based on their motivational and relational orientation, highlighting that these styles

do not manifest in isolation but can be combined depending on the organizational context and gender perspective.

*Category 2: Effects on Performance*

This category examines how different leadership styles influence organizational effectiveness and team dynamics. Both performance indicators (efficiency, achievement of objectives) and relational aspects (cohesion, innovation, collaboration) are taken into account.

*Category 3: Determining Factors*

This category encompasses the factors that shape or influence the exercise of leadership, regardless of gender.

Their analysis revealed that, within this category, the differences observed in leadership are not due to biological factors, but rather to social and institutional contexts that shape leadership styles and their effects.

**Table 3**  
*Concurrent Triangulation*

Categories	Quantitative Evidence	Qualitative Evidence	Integrated Interpretation
<b>Leadership Styles (Transformational vs. Transactional)</b>	15 men and 12 women with transformational leadership; 2 men with transactional leadership; no instances of laissez-faire leadership. Gender accounts for 27.1% of the variation.	Male executives: downplay the influence of gender. Female managers and their subordinates: differences in closeness, empathy, and collaboration stand out.	Although the statistical data do not show a significant association, the narrative reveals perceived differences in practice, influenced by stereotypes and context.
<b>Effects on Performance</b>	There are no significant differences in overall effectiveness ( $p > 0.05$ ).	Women: They build team cohesion and foster innovation. Men: They emphasize control and immediate results.	Complementary styles enhance team performance, regardless of gender.
<b>Determining Factors</b>	72% of the variation is attributable to factors other than sex.	The accounts highlight the importance of career progression, organizational culture, and opportunities.	Gender is not a biological determinant, but rather a cultural and contextual factor.

In short, there was an analytical tension between the quantitative and qualitative findings. Since, based on the sample, it was found that gender accounts for only 27.1% of the variation in leadership styles, with no significant association between the two.

However, qualitative interviews show that gender perceptions influence how leadership is exercised and evaluated: male managers tend to downplay the influence of gender, while female managers and subordinates identified substantial differences in rapport, collaboration, and organizational climate.

Therefore, both findings contribute to the research, and their results should be interpreted with caution and within the context of the sample's limitations.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

The findings were **organized** around four central themes that **guided** our understanding of the phenomenon under study.

First, leadership is a multidimensional construct, as the results showed that leadership cannot be understood as a strict consequence of biological sex, but rather as the product of a complex interaction between individual factors (career trajectory, education, and experience), cultural factors (socially assigned gender roles, prevailing values within the institution), and organizational factors (policies, hierarchical structures, and internal dynamics).

Consequently, this integrative approach made it possible to argue that leadership style is not determined solely by whether a person is male or female, but rather by a multitude of factors that shape the way each manager performs their role.

Second, the persistent relevance of gender in perceptions of leadership: although the statistical analysis did not find a significant association between sex and leadership style, the qualitative study revealed that, from the perspective of female managers and their subordinates, gender is a factor that influences managerial practice. In this way, gender emerged as a variable that, beyond quantitative results, continues to influence the social and cultural construction of leadership.

Third, I would like to point out that the cultural shift toward gender equality is not limited to the implementation of institutional policies, but rather requires broader processes of symbolic transformation capable of changing social expectations and the perceptions associated with leadership.

Finally, the findings of the literature review revealed a strategic approach to public management focused on continuous improvement, the integration of gender and human rights, and the optimization of resources.

Public institutions are taking active steps to ensure that their objectives are not only achieved but also effectively measured and adjusted through performance indicators and strategic plans.

### **Limitations of the Study**

These factors influenced the scope of the findings and must be taken into account when interpreting the results; the following were identified:

1. Small sample size: The sample used in the quantitative analysis (n=29) and qualitative analysis (8 interviews) was limited in relation to the total population of managers and subordinates at the SADP. This limitation restricted the ability to generalize the findings to a broader population, as the conclusions apply primarily to the subjects analyzed.

2. Cross-sectional design: This involved collecting data at a specific point in time, which made it possible to describe perceptions and leadership practices within a given time frame. The findings reflected the current state of affairs but did not capture the evolving dynamics of the phenomena under study, which is a critical consideration in organizational contexts undergoing constant change.

3. Restricted geographic focus: The study focused exclusively on public institutions in Chile's 12th Region, which constituted a significant geographical limitation. While this approach allowed for a deeper exploration of a regional context with specific cultural and organizational characteristics, the results are not

necessarily applicable to other regions of the country, where different sociopolitical, institutional, and gender-related realities may coexist.

4. Self-perception and subjective narratives: The qualitative analysis drew on in-depth interviews, which involved working with self-perceptions and subjective accounts from managers and subordinates. While this type of information enhances our understanding of the phenomenon based on lived experience, it can also be influenced by social desirability biases or narratives shaped by hierarchical position and institutional context.

### **Proposals for Continuity**

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several areas for further research were identified that could broaden and deepen our understanding of leadership within the SADP framework, particularly its relationship to gender.

1. Expansion of the sample to a national level: to include managers and subordinates from different regions of the country and various sectors of the public administration. To compare regional and sectoral patterns, as well as to examine whether perceptions and differences in leadership styles remain constant or vary depending on specific contexts.

2. Conducting longitudinal studies: these will make it possible to track changes in the representation of women and leadership styles over time. This approach would make it easier to identify trends, generational shifts, and the effects of public policies on gender equality, thereby providing a dynamic rather than static view of the phenomenon.

3. Incorporating an intersectional approach: Consider the influence of additional variables that interact with gender in the development of leadership, such as age, educational background, career history, membership in certain social groups, and the institutional context. This would allow for a more nuanced and nuanced understanding of inequalities in access to and the exercise of leadership, as well as highlight the diversity of experiences.

4. Promotion of institutional interventions: It is recommended that policies and programs be designed and implemented to encourage women to apply for senior management positions. Possible strategies include the creation of mentoring programs, leadership training initiatives with a gender focus, and the promotion of women leaders as positive role models in the public sphere. These actions would help reduce disparities in access and strengthen inclusive and transformational leadership.

5. International comparative research: conduct comparative studies with other countries that have established SADPs, with the aim of identifying best practices in the areas of gender equity and inclusive leadership.-This would allow for a comparison of the Chilean case with international experiences, enriching the analysis and providing input for the development of policies that strengthen substantive equality in access to and the exercise of public leadership.

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## **Influence of Adults on the Challenges Faced by Children and Adolescents: A Perspective on Empathy, Prevention, and Development**

### **Influencia de los adultos en los retos que enfrentan niños, niñas y adolescentes: una mirada hacia la empatía, la prevención y la formación**

**Genibert Hernández Abad**

Universidad Internacional Iberoamericana (Dominican Republic)

[geniber.0101@gmail.com](mailto:geniber.0101@gmail.com)

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#### **Manuscript information:**

**Recibido/Received:** 27/09/25

**Revisado/Reviewed:** 22/05/26

**Acceptado/Accepted:** 03/06/26

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#### **ABSTRACT**

**Keywords:**

adults, adolescents, problems, support, education.

The present research aims to promote empathy toward children and adolescents by seeking opportune strategies that allow for the mitigation of risk situations that may arise during these stages, thus enabling them to become healthy and competent adults capable of being promoters of peace and care.

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#### **RESUMEN**

**Palabras clave:**

adultos, adolescentes, problemas, apoyo, educación.

La presente investigación tiene como finalidad promover la empatía hacia los niños/as y adolescentes buscando estrategias oportunas que permitan menguar las situaciones de riesgos que puedan presentarse en estas etapas permitiéndoles así convertirse en adultos sanos y competentes capaces de ser promotores de paz y cuidado.

## **Introduction**

When our childhood experiences are painful, a part of our personality develops that holds negative beliefs about ourselves; these beliefs will influence our daily lives as adults and, in many cases, will prevent us from moving forward in life in a healthy and appropriate way. (Psicoavanza, 2017)

Traumas and wounds, as well as childhood limitations, are among the biggest obstacles to adults' emotional well-being. As adults, we tend to downplay children's complaints or problems when they voice them; yet we always hope that future generations will not have to go through the same experiences we did. When recalling an experience we consider negative, it is difficult not to succumb to feelings such as sadness, anger, disappointment, and so on. Our adult selves are nothing more than a reflection of—and the result of—the experiences we had during childhood and adolescence.

It should come as no surprise to anyone that children's unmet needs can lead to deficiencies in adulthood. As the PSICOPSI research group states in its paper on early childhood education: the role of adults: It is within the family that children truly learn essential values, and where the emotional bonds necessary for an individual's overall development are forged.

It is in this environment that children take their first and most important steps toward learning, forming relationships, discovering themselves, and communicating. A child's first experiences of affection, rejection, and encouragement come from the family environment. That is why most of the issues that children and adolescents may face tend to arise within the family; the more time they spend together, the more likely it is that conflicts will arise. Parents should be mindful of their role as parents and stay informed about the situations their children face, both at home and outside the home.

It can be argued that the problems children face can become far more serious than those faced by adults when they lack the means to find answers or solutions—for example, the absence of parents attentive to their needs or a school concerned solely with academic knowledge... whereas as adults, we possess a wide range of possibilities to resolve situations typical of this stage—such as skills and abilities, capacity, and maturity—to which external factors are added, such as employment opportunities and assistance from associations, institutions, or organizations to which one can turn; Children and adolescents do not yet possess the skills, abilities, and maturity to resolve all the problems they may face; they depend on their parents and the resources available to them. Therefore, if any disruption occurs within the family system, there are few means available to minors to resolve these challenges without being affected physically, socially, or emotionally. “Since children are more vulnerable, they are exposed to more potentially traumatic situations.” (Gonzalez, 2019)

Problems or situations such as parental separation, abandonment, orphanhood, physical, verbal, psychological, or sexual abuse, or neglect; illness; rejection; humiliation; child labor; bullying; the death of a loved one; and early marriages are just some of the issues that can cause severe trauma affecting a person's entire life in such a way that, even with hard work, effort, and therapy, it takes many years to see signs of improvement. Unfortunately, every child has experienced at least one of these. The challenges mentioned above can be classified into three main categories: family dysfunction, neglect, and unforeseen events.

## **Family Dysfunction**

When a family is plagued by violence, a lack of understanding, humiliation, and all forms of abuse, it is impossible for children to remain physically and emotionally unscathed; Parents' fights or breakups unconsciously send the message to other family members that there is no

other way to resolve conflicts except through violence, and this leads to the entrenchment of such behaviors, which later manifest in other aspects of each member's life, extending beyond the family environment and appearing in settings such as school or the community, generating other problems that, in one way or another, destroy their innocence and turn them into agents of violence. Physical or psychological violence does not teach children to "behave," but rather to avoid punishment. In this way, children and adolescents learn only what they must do to avoid upsetting the adult who engages in these practices.

In addition, exposure to violent situations can disrupt the brain's physiological development and affect a child or adolescent's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social growth. UNICEF, 2020: "Rape is an extremely traumatic experience that can cause immense harm; it has severe consequences and inflicts significant physical and psychological damage, leaving the victim 'physically and emotionally humiliated'—a situation that is difficult to overcome with the passage of time, unlike what happens with other traumatic experiences." Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Child labor affects the physical and emotional development of children. Children may develop chronic illnesses or malnutrition as a result of being exposed to long working hours, heavy loads, hazardous substances, or abuse by adults. In addition, they suffer the consequences of living in a hostile or violent environment. In many cases, they are separated from their families. They also lose their right to an education, since balancing work and school leads to higher dropout rates.

In other cases, they are forced to leave class altogether. All of this affects their personal development. Alonso, 2023: Bullying is a form of violence that can go unnoticed by parents and authorities, who often dismiss it as "just kids being kids" and downplay its significance. However, this social phenomenon has emotional and psychological effects on the victim, while also encouraging and normalizing the perpetrator's use of violence. CONCEPT ENCYCLOPEDIA, 2013–2023 Child marriage and early unions are harmful practices that particularly affect girls and adolescent girls. It limits their opportunities for education and development, exposes them to violence, sexual abuse, and early pregnancy, and prevents them from exercising their rights.

Child marriage and early unions undermine all efforts to combat poverty, exacerbate social inequality, and pass these conditions on to future generations. This serious form of gender-based violence not only affects adolescent girls and their immediate families, but also hinders the progress of Dominican society as a whole. UNICEF REP. SUN.

The paragraphs cited above paint a grim but necessary picture of the various forms of violence that shape the lives of millions of children and adolescents. From physical and psychological abuse in the home to bullying, child labor, forced marriage, and sexual violence, all of these practices have one thing in common: they are perpetrated, tolerated, or swept under the rug by adults.

Each situation described reveals not only child suffering, but also a failure to act or direct action on the part of responsible adults: parents, caregivers, teachers, authorities, and even community leaders, as we will see later. Children have neither a voice nor the power to change their reality on their own; that is why, when their rights are violated, the question must always be directed at adults: Where are we? What should we do—or not do?

Children and adolescents—though the latter to a lesser extent—depend on adults to live with dignity, love, and respect. It is not enough to simply be outraged by the statistics or individual cases; we must urgently take an active role—in the way we educate, in the laws we advocate for, and in the spaces we create.

## **Negligence**

Neglect is the failure of a parent or other caregiver to meet a child's basic needs. childwelfare, 2019 Many parents, due to work, obligations, and responsibilities, lack the time

to pay attention to the small details in their children's lives, often focusing solely on meeting their basic needs such as food, education, and health; however, we know that being a parent involves much more than that; showing affection and attention, and caring about the issues or situations that arise in children's lives, are essential. Emotional distance on the part of parents can lead to a lack of trust and detachment in their children. As if that weren't enough, the situation described above is not even the worst-case scenario; when negligence in meeting basic needs is added to the mix, we are already talking about a crime in which the direct victims are always children and adolescents. Apart from the legal aspects, those affected by this issue tend to suffer from serious emotional consequences, such as feelings of rejection, abandonment, and low self-esteem, which can take years to overcome.

Pérez, Ordóñez, and Amador, 2018: Negligence is considered minor when the act or acts involve risky behavior but have not led to intervention by a public child welfare agency. These are issues that are usually resolved through minor adjustments at the community level. For example, transporting a child in a car without proper safety restraints (which can result in a fine). Negligence is considered moderate when the events occur following a minimally intrusive community intervention—that is, one of a local nature—that has failed, or when such events could cause harm to the child, such as repeatedly dressing inappropriately for inclement weather. Gross negligence is considered to occur when a particular course of conduct could result in potentially serious harm in the short, medium, or long term; for example, when a child with asthma is repeatedly hospitalized because caregivers fail to properly treat the condition.

### **Unforeseen Events**

Life is full of situations that are impossible to foresee and that can have such a profound impact that they may leave a lasting mark on a person. Illness and death are unforeseen events that, depending on their severity, can alter the course of an individual's life, becoming an obstacle to their full and effective personal, social, and emotional development and growth. Children who have a medical condition, especially if it is chronic, may struggle in school and feel overprotected.

They may experience recurring fear and pain. If these emotional difficulties are not addressed, they can lead to anxiety, sadness, withdrawal, defiance, or a loss of interest in school. HealthyChildren, 2015

Being an adult means carrying the weight of the challenges inherent to this stage of life—such as financial difficulties and social and emotional burdens—which gradually sap one's energy and vitality day by day. If, on top of this, one is burdened by limitations and suffering stemming from childhood and adolescent experiences, the harsh reality of adulthood would prevent one from functioning effectively in society.

That is why it is essential that part of the responsibility adults bear is to help children and adolescents live in an environment of harmony and healthy coexistence, so that they can grow up without having to endure traumatic experiences that lead to anxiety, stress, and depression. Of course, it is impossible to prevent problems and situations that cause distress from occurring, however, a random incident does not carry the same emotional weight as an act of violence intentionally inflicted on a child by an adult—especially someone close to them. For all of the reasons mentioned above, it is important that homes, schools, and other institutions responsible for the protection and care of children and adolescents foster healthy environments where they can enjoy their formative years in peace.

It is possible to prevent or address any problems that may arise by prioritizing the best interests of children and adolescents, safeguarding their rights, and helping them understand their responsibilities. By sharing in their struggles and achievements, supporting them, and guiding them. Eliminating violence as a means of “discipline and correction.”

By paying attention to their needs in various aspects of their lives. When faced with problems that are difficult or impossible to avoid, help them overcome the fears and uncertainties that come with the situation, do not downplay their feelings, and seek appropriate help if necessary.

To support parents, children, and adolescents in addressing the various challenges they may face at any given time, the Ministry of Education of the Dominican Republic, through the guidance and psychology units of each school, programs, projects, and strategies have been implemented that have enabled parents, students, and even the community to understand and feel that schools are a pillar dedicated to assisting, supporting, and accompanying individuals through every stage of life. The development of these strategies has led to a significant reduction in family breakdown and all forms of existing violence, as well as the issues arising within educational institutions themselves—since these do not stem from the behavior or negligence of adults, but rather from the peers of children and adolescents—can be significantly reduced, making society, school, and the family safer places where children and adolescents can grow, develop their abilities, and live without fear.

The goal is for all children and adolescents, without exception, to live and grow up free from violence and its consequences; however, the gap caused by ignorance, destructive behaviors, and neglect prevents this from being fully achieved.

While it is true that society cannot be perfect—because human beings are full of both virtues and flaws—the goal of a counselor, teacher, parent, professional authority figure, or adult in general should be to work so that future generations can find, even amid imperfection, peace of mind and support that will enable them to become adults who, in turn, work for the well-being of those who come after them.

## **Method**

To understand how adult behavior has influenced the challenges faced by children and/or adolescents, a questionnaire has been developed to collect data and information on their sociodemographic characteristics, the type of family they come from, and instances of violence against them by parents, relatives, or institutions that are part of their development and environment, as well as to determine whether issues such as bullying, working instead of studying, or other complications have hindered their continued attendance or normal school life, and whether these challenges have led to suicidal thoughts, ideation, or attempts, among other factors... This questionnaire was administered via Google Forms to facilitate data collection and ensure greater flexibility in data reception.

## **Results**

The questionnaire, which was used to gather information on how adults' behavior influences the problems or situations faced by children and adolescents, yielded the following results:

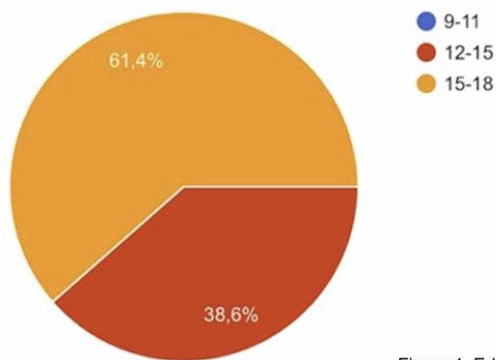


Figura 1. Edad

In terms of sociodemographic characteristics, such as age, gender, and place of residence, the data show that 38.6% are between the ages of 12 and 15, while 61.4% are between the ages of 15 and 18.

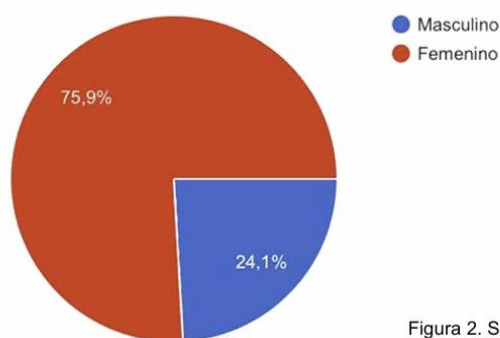


Figura 2. Sexo

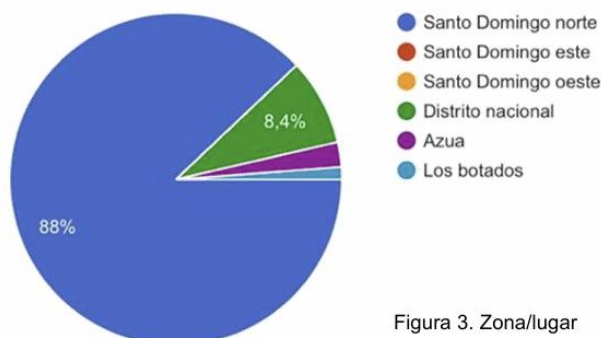


Figura 3. Zona/lugar

75.9% of respondents are female, while the remaining 24.1% are male. 88% of the survey sample lives in Santo Domingo, 8% in Santo Domingo Norte, and 4% in the National District.

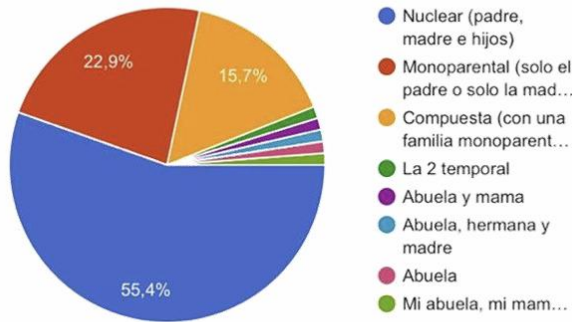


Figura 4. Tipo de familia

As for the type of family in which they live, 55.4% of the sample belongs to a nuclear family—that is, consisting of a father, mother, and children—22.9% belong to a single-parent family (either just the mother or just the father with their children), and 15.7% live with one of their parents and a stepfather or stepmother, with or without children as well. The remaining 6% report living with their grandmother, mother, and siblings or another type of family.

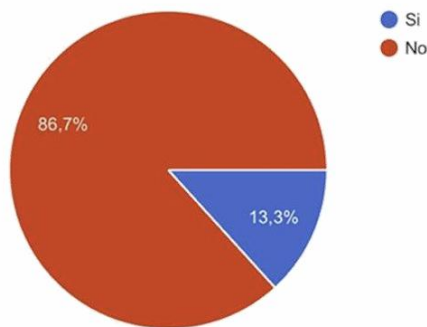


Figura 5. Abuso físico por parte de familiares

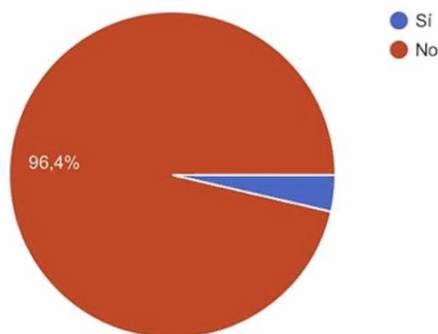


Figura 6. Abuso físico en la escuela o en la comunidad

Of the reported cases, 13.3% have been physically abused by their parents or another family member. Meanwhile, 86.7% say they have not been physically abused by their parents. With regard to school or the community, 96.4% report that they have not experienced physical abuse from these sources, while the remaining 3.6% have.

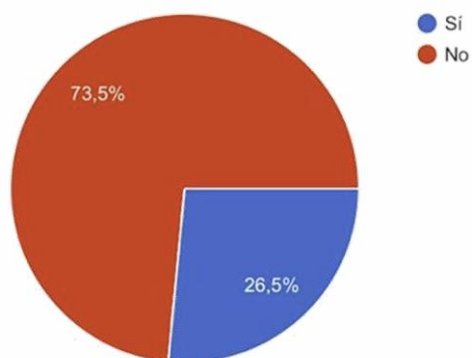


Figura 7. Abuso verbal o psicológico en la familia

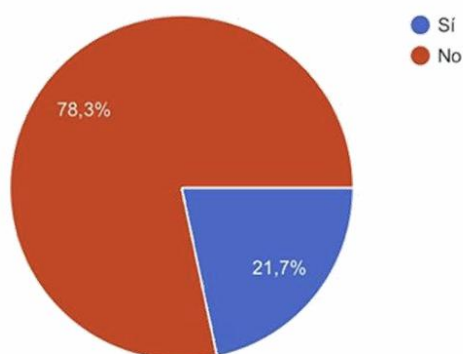


Figura 8. Abuso verbal o psicológico en la comunidad

26.5% of the sample has experienced verbal and psychological abuse at the hands of their parents or relatives, while 73.5% has not experienced this type of abuse. 21.7% have experienced this type of abuse at school or at the hands of an adult in the community, while 78.3% reported that they have not experienced this type of abuse in their environment.

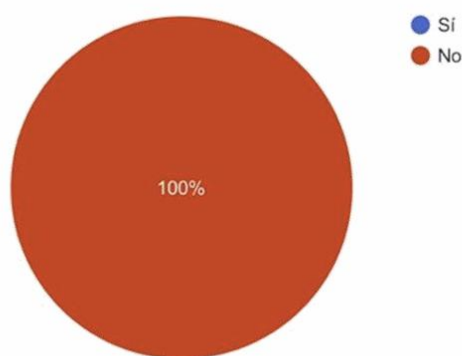


Figura 9. Abuso sexual en la familia, escuela o comunidad

When asked whether they had been victims of sexual abuse by their parents, relatives, at school, or in the community, 100% of the sample responded that they had not experienced this type of abuse.

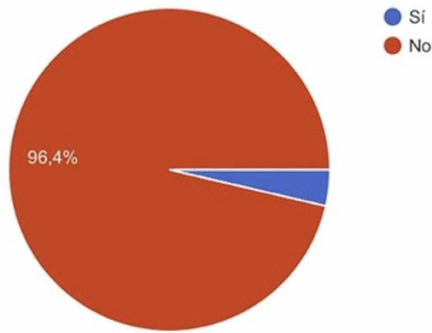


Figura 10. Abuso por negligencia de parte de padres o familiares

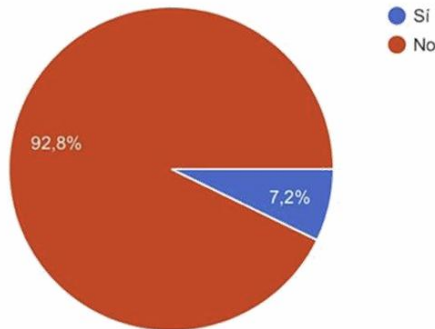


Figura 11. Abuso por negligencia en la escuela o comunidad de parte de un adulto

While 3.6% of the sample reported having been victims of abuse or neglect by their parents, 7.2% reported having suffered neglect at school.

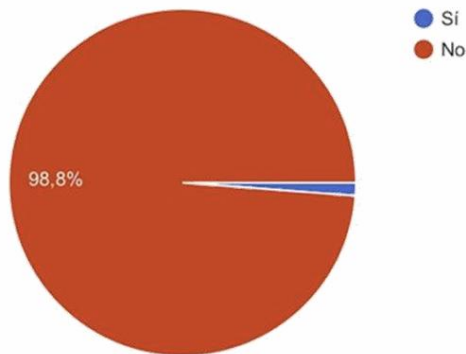


Figura 12. Padecimiento de enfermedad o condiciones en la infancia

98.8% of respondents reported that they had not suffered from any illness or condition that prevented them from living a normal childhood or adolescence; however, 1.2% of them had to drop out of school to work, due to family circumstances or early marriage.

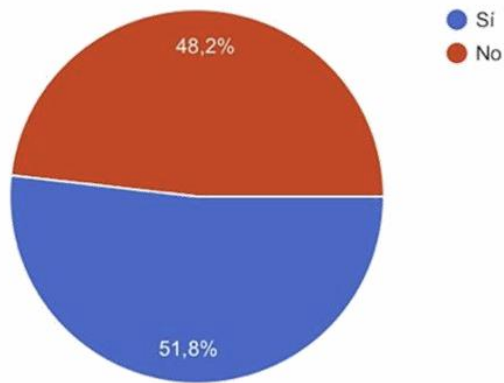


Figura 13. Víctimas de bullying

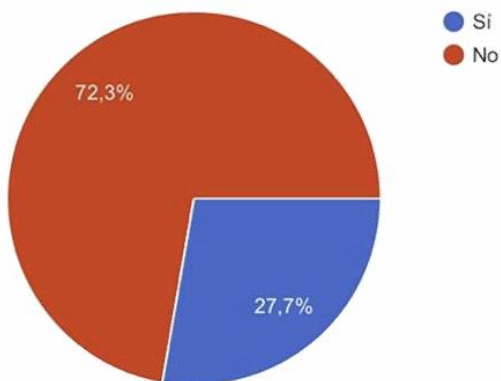


Figura 14. Pensamientos o intentos suicidas

51.8% of respondents say they have been bullied, and 27.7% have had suicidal thoughts, ideation, or attempts at some point.

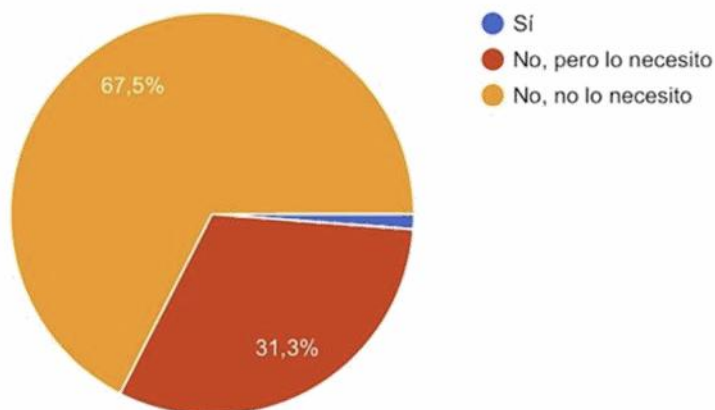


Figura 15. Asistencia a terapia

Although 67.7% say they do not need therapy, 31.3% say that even though they do not attend therapy, they understand that they need it. The remaining 1% will attend.

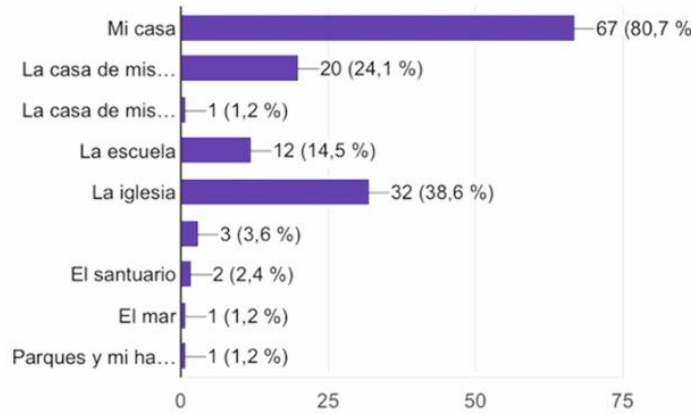


Figura 16. Lugares seguros y de apoyo

Among the places highlighted in the survey where they feel safe and find the support they need and deserve are their own homes (80.7%), church (38.6%), their grandparents' or aunts' and uncles' homes (24.1%), and school (14.5%). It should be noted that for this question, respondents could select more than one option.

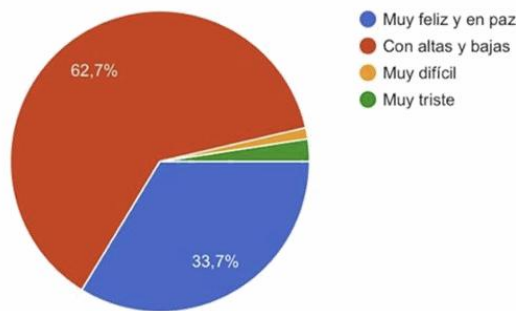


Figura 17. Opinión sobre infancia o adolescencia

33.7% feel that they did not have a happy childhood or adolescence; 62.7% acknowledge that they experienced ups and downs during these stages, while 3.6% say that these were sad and/or difficult times.

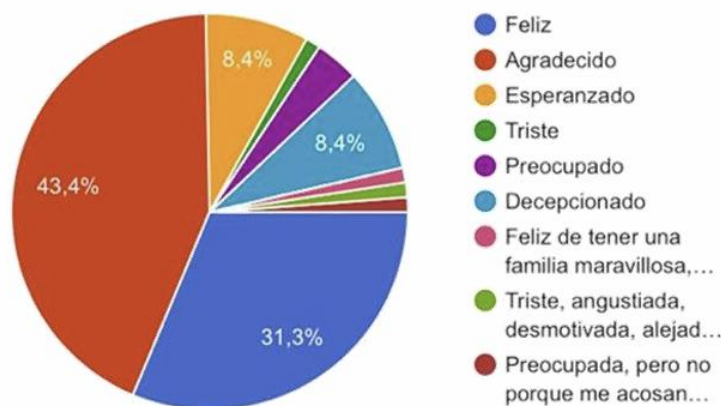


Figura 18. En estos momentos de su vida, ¿Cómo se siente?

Among the feelings reported by respondents at the time they completed the questionnaire, the following stand out: happy (31.3%), grateful (43.4%), hopeful (8.4%),

and disappointed (8.4%), among others, with 8.5% reporting feelings such as sadness, worry, and anxiety.

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## **Discussion and Conclusions** (14 points)

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Although it would be natural, common, or normal to analyze the following results starting with the first graphs, it has become necessary to begin with the last one, which reflects the feelings of the respondents at the time they completed the questionnaire: more than 70% expressed feeling happy and grateful, as well as hopeful, while 16.9% indicated feeling disappointed, sad, worried, or distressed... the question at this moment would be: Why start here? Because this reflects the vivid and palpable reality of how teenagers feel; the fact that most of them are happy is a good indication that the behavior of parents toward their children—or of adults in general, including institutions that work with children and teenagers—the guidelines for getting along well with them, and the experiences they are having, are positive. But on the other hand, there is a reality that many refuse to acknowledge when they claim that children or adolescents don't have problems because they are not yet adults—a stage that many consider the most stressful due to responsibilities, debts, and children—sometimes even going so far as to downplay the pain or feelings of children and adolescents who face various challenges, such as those seen in the results, and others that may be just the tip of the iceberg of what many must endure. That 16.9% represents the adolescents who do not feel they receive the support they deserve and need—at least not all the time.

However, the 62.7% who have stated that they experienced ups and downs during adolescence are fully aware that, regardless of age, human beings can face countless situations—whether family-related, school-related, social, or personal—and move forward with the support of others, especially those who, as they understand, should be the most important people in anyone's life: their parents. Although adolescence may bring a greater attachment to peers and a distancing from adults—who are often labeled as incomprehensible by the adolescents themselves—their behaviors and attitudes can set a positive or negative precedent for them.

The fact that 80.7% of respondents chose their home as the safest place and the place where they receive the most support is a good indication that care is being promoted within the family. That is how it should be; it is the parents' responsibility and role to make their home a safe place for their children. The church or faith serves as a pillar of support and a safe haven for its believers, as evidenced by the 38.6% of respondents.

Faith, of course, is instilled by parents in their children from an early age, although some disagree with the practice of fostering faith or any religious belief before children have developed sufficient awareness to decide for themselves. Those who do agree understand that faith is like a vaccine given to a baby to prevent it from contracting a disease; You don't wait for the child to decide whether or not to get the vaccine because it is understood to be for the child's well-being and health; similarly, faith, in this case, serves as a spiritual vaccine instilled in the child so that when they become aware and can distinguish right from wrong, they have guidance or support through faith to make any decision.

School is another place identified by respondents as a safe and supportive environment where they can feel at ease and at peace, although the percentage is lower, at 14.5%, this reflects that for some, it is more than just an institution created to ensure each individual's learning; it is also a home where they have an educational family they can rely on and connect with others,

as well as develop and connect with themselves, discovering all the potential within them to unlock.

The fact that the percentage of students who view their school as a safe and supportive place also highlights the other side of the coin: many students do not feel fully cared for on their school campus due to situations like bullying. The survey revealed that more than 50% of respondents have been victims of this type of abuse—an alarming figure that raises the following question: what more can be done for and in the interest of education? It is not enough simply to teach the subjects corresponding to each grade level, nor is it enough to teach values; it is necessary to lay the groundwork and create opportunities for what goes beyond a subject or the teaching of good habits—habits that should be practiced not only at home first, nor in society someday, but in the day-to-day life of the school, since for some, school is their refuge and their home, it becomes necessary to teach and help put into practice the things that are understood to belong to the home, to the family... It seems contradictory that school should have to teach what should be learned at home, but it is not—not for that small percentage who do not receive adequate attention or education at home. If the school turns a blind eye, claiming that values should be taught at home, we will only end up with children and adolescents who, neither at home nor at school, will learn what they should, and so they will learn whatever they can elsewhere.

27.7% reported in the questionnaire that they have had suicidal thoughts, ideations, and attempts; although this figure is lower than that for bullying, it remains just as alarming. Above all, because 31.3% of them—even though they have never gone to therapy—understand that they need it. This may be due either to the presence of any form of violence or to some other risky situation.

The emotional well-being of children and adolescents is often as fragile and vulnerable as the adults responsible for their care allow it to be. Every adult responsible for a child or teenager has the power to safeguard that child or teenager's emotional well-being by helping them develop self-esteem, confidence in their abilities, an awareness of their limitations, and a commitment to continuous self-improvement. As well as helping, guiding, and supporting them as they learn to manage their own emotions and respect the emotions and feelings of others.

All of this will help create human beings who are more empathetic and sensitive to the feelings of others, while also being stronger and more resilient—capable of setting aside fear, shame, and concerns about what others might say in order to ask for help when they need it, and to speak openly with their peers and elders, and thus ensure that in times of difficulty, when facing challenging situations and problems, they do not remain silent—which can give rise to negative thoughts, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts—but rather remain open to dialogue and actively listen to those who care about their personal well-being.

Unforeseen events and illnesses—which are beyond the control and intentions of adults yet affect children and adolescents—as well as early marriages and child labor are a thorn in the side, since, although the rates are low (1.2% and 4%, respectively), these are situations that can prevent a student from completing their education as intended and call into question the work of adults in caring for and protecting them. It also questions the behavior of parents and adults in general, citing findings that show 13.3% have been physically abused by their parents or a family member, and 3.6% at school or in the community. 26.5% of the sample has experienced verbal and psychological abuse at the hands of their parents or relatives, and 21.7% has experienced this type of abuse at school or at the hands of an adult in the community.

100% have not been victims of sexual abuse by their parents, relatives, at school, or in the community, while 3.6% of the sample report having been victims of abuse or neglect by their parents, and 7.2% report having suffered neglect at school. These figures may seem relatively low or even nonexistent, as in the case of sexual abuse; however, each and every one of these forms of violence, without exception, is present in many families, educational

institutions, and other governmental and nongovernmental organizations. Without detracting from the ongoing efforts made by families, institutions, and society to maintain and even improve the quality of life and well-being of the most vulnerable, children and adolescents through programs, projects, training, and educational and social strategies, it is essential that these efforts not remain merely pilot initiatives, but rather permeate every setting responsible for the care and protection of children and adolescents. Furthermore, no effort should be spared in terms of human and financial resources to ensure that these existing programs, created to support this population, can be effectively implemented.

To expand on the resolutions regarding this issue, the following proposal is put forward: “I recognize and cherish the value within me.” This school-based project aims to equip students with tools that enable them to recognize and value their own lives, understanding that life is a priceless gift that must be cherished.

Personal and family problems and situations, as well as academic and social ones, can trigger recurring emotional distress, low self-esteem, stress, anxiety, or even depression in adolescents, which can lead to suicidal thoughts, ideation, and attempts. The purpose of this project is to prevent all of the above through a variety of individual and group activities—both preventive and intervention-based—that involve parents and the entire educational community.

### **Overall objective of the project:**

To promote healthy self-esteem and emotional well-being among adolescents so that they can recognize and value themselves and others. Specific objectives:

- To reduce negative decision-making among students that could affect their emotions and attitudes toward their academic, personal, and social performance.
- Organize activities such as workshops, lectures, and one-on-one meetings that help adolescents recognize the value of life and develop healthy self-esteem.
- To instill in families and staff at the Early Childhood Center the values of empathy, assertive communication, and understanding, so that these qualities can serve as sources of support in times of vulnerability. Through this project, the following activities and/or strategies can be implemented:
- Workshops: These workshops aim to raise awareness among students about the importance of recognizing and nurturing their personal values, their bodies, and their lives in order to achieve full personal, family, and social development, improve their interpersonal relationships, and, above all, strengthen their self-esteem by taking care of their emotional well-being.
- Motivational mirror: designed to comfort, cheer up, and encourage through positive affirmations displayed around a mirror, so that when people look at themselves, they are reminded of just how valuable they are.
- Parent Meetings: In situations of risk and vulnerability, the family should be at the center of each individual’s support network. Therefore, these meetings aim to raise parents’ awareness of the role they play in their children’s lives and the positive or negative influence they can have on their children’s self-perception and outlook on life in general.
- Because I Love Myself: This is a craft activity that involves making a box or decorating a jar to hold all the things I need to forgive myself for, the things I’m grateful for, and the reasons why I love myself.
- Letter to My Pain: It is simply a way of expressing, through writing, everything you feel and what you consider to have become a source of pain in your life.
- Musical reflection: creates a space for reflection and introspection through music, which is then analyzed and compared with the student’s personal experience.

- **Mandala:** When a student says they are unable to speak or write, drawing can help them calm down or settle.
- **Letter from Mom/Dad:** The student receives a letter written by one of their parents in which they express their love and affection for their child and what they expect from them.
- **Reflective discussion and self-assessment:** discussing how you feel and reflecting on how you have handled the experience are essential steps that should not be overlooked.
- **Empowering the student council and training staff:** the support of these stakeholders in implementing all planned actions is vital, as they will serve as advocates and partners in this project.
- **Digital campaign:** Messages and photos are shared with parent groups and on social media to promote the project, which aims to boost self-esteem and support emotional well-being.
- **Self-Esteem Inventory:** This tool facilitates the collection of relevant information about the student's emotional state and their reactions or decision-making in response to that state or situation.
- **Digital Emotional Inventory:** This tool enables the weekly collection of data on the emotional well-being of students who are in a particularly vulnerable situation, allowing for more continuous and in-depth monitoring, especially during school breaks.
- **Promoting the project at a school innovation fair:** This is being carried out through a booth set up by the Department of Counseling and Psychology, where visitors can watch videos from the digital campaign, pick up brochures and candy, take photos, view the motivational mirror, and write a message or piece of advice for themselves or others on a chalkboard.

Although the project is not specifically aimed at parents, but rather at children and adolescents themselves, it has a direct impact on them—and not only on them, but on all the adults who are part of the educational community.

The goal of all this is to help teenagers understand the importance of their own emotional health and that of others, thereby preventing them from engaging in bullying or being affected by it, and to eliminate suicidal thoughts, ideation, and attempts, since these indicators account for the highest percentage of negative responses in the questionnaire administered.

## **Conclusions**

The findings of this research have the potential to enrich and directly influence educational policies and programs aimed at the holistic development of students through the active involvement of responsible adults. Promoting empathy, care, and prevention within the family and school environments is key to raising healthier generations committed to the common good.

It is important to understand that just because children and teenagers do not have the same obligations and responsibilities as adults, they still suffer, get tired, and are hurt by the difficult situations they find themselves in at any given time. That is why we must not underestimate their emotions, feelings, attitudes, and actions, since each of these is part of what defines them as human beings—vulnerable individuals who find strength in the support of others—and every adult should serve as that source of support for every teenager entrusted to their care.

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## **Family dynamics in same-sex parent families: a systematic review**

### **Dinámicas familiares en familias homo-parentales: una revisión sistemática**

**Cristian M. Ayllón-Gutiérrez**

Universidad de las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Spain)

[cristian.ayllon101@alu.ulpgc.es](mailto:cristian.ayllon101@alu.ulpgc.es) (<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5567-9336>)

**Mar Suarez**

Universidad de las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Spain)

[mar.suarez@ulpgc.es](mailto:mar.suarez@ulpgc.es) (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2393-2228>)

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#### **Manuscript information:**

**Received/Recibido:** 23/07/25

**Reviewed/Revisado:** 21/11/25

**Accepted/Aceptado:** 21/02/26

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#### **ABSTRACT**

**Key words:**

family dynamics, same-parent families, parenting, family diversity, psychological adjustment.

Sociocultural transformations in recent decades have given rise to increasingly diverse family models, including same-sex parent families. This article aims to analyse the family dynamics within these households, focusing on parenting practices, emotional bonds, and their impact on the emotional, behavioural, and social adjustment of children and adolescents. A systematic review was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. Seventeen empirical studies, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method, published in journals indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, or ProQuest were analysed. The results reveal a predominance of democratic parenting styles, marked by strong emotional involvement, shared caregiving responsibilities, and the prioritisation of dialogue as a key educational strategy. Parenting approaches were also found to be child-centred, inclusive, and free from traditional gender role expectations. Relationships with educational and social environments were generally collaborative, though not without tensions arising from prevailing heteronormative legal and cultural frameworks. Most studies concluded that children raised in same-sex parent families exhibit healthy psychological and social adjustment, comparable to that of children from heterosexual-parent families. In conclusion, parental sexual orientation is not a risk factor for child development. Same-sex parent families emerge as legitimate, competent, and enriching caregiving environments. However, significant gaps in the current literature remain, particularly the lack of longitudinal studies and the limited inclusion of children's own voices in research designs. These limitations underscore the need for more inclusive, context-sensitive studies that reflect the full diversity of contemporary family structures.

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#### **RESUMEN**

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**Palabras clave:**

family dynamics, homoparental families, childrearing, family diversity, psychological adjustment.

Las transformaciones socioculturales de las últimas décadas han dado pie a modelos familiares diversos, entre ellos las familias homoparentales. Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar las dinámicas familiares de familias homoparentales, explorando sus prácticas educativas, vínculos afectivos y el impacto en el ajuste emocional, conductual y social de los hijos e hijas. Para ello, se realizó una revisión sistemática en conformidad con la declaración PRISMA 2020. Se analizaron 17 estudios empíricos, de carácter cuantitativo, cualitativo y mixto, publicados en revistas indexadas en Scopus, Web of Science o ProQuest. Los resultados muestran una prevalencia de estilos parentales democráticos, caracterizados por una alta implicación emocional, corresponsabilidad en las tareas de cuidado y el uso del diálogo como principal estrategia educativa. Se observa también una crianza centrada en el bienestar infantil, libre de estereotipos de género. Aunque las relaciones con el entorno educativo y social tienden a ser colaborativas, persisten tensiones ligadas a marcos normativos y culturales aún marcados por la heteronormatividad. La mayoría de los estudios concluyen que hijas e hijos de familias homoparentales presentan un ajuste psicológico y social saludable, similar al observado en familias heterosexuales. En conclusión, la orientación sexual de las figuras parentales no supone un riesgo para el desarrollo infantil. Las familias homoparentales se consolidan como entornos de crianza válidos y competentes. No obstante, se identifican carencias en la literatura, como la escasez de estudios longitudinales y la limitada voz de los hijos e hijas, lo que apunta a la necesidad de investigaciones más inclusivas y contextualizadas.

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## Introduction

During the last decades, the concept of *family* has undergone a profound resignification, accompanied by structural transformations that reflect the dynamism and complexity of contemporary societies (Rioja, 2019). This process has entailed not only a redefinition of interpersonal relationships and emotional ties, but also a rethinking of the normative categories that had traditionally delimited the margins of the family. In this context, traditional models - based on heterosexuality, gender-differentiated biparenthood and biological filiation - have given way to new configurations that challenge hegemonic conceptions and make way for more plural and inclusive forms of coexistence (Borrillo et al., 2018).

Among these new realities, *homoparental families* stand out, understood as those in which one or more adults of the same sex assume the upbringing of children, whether through adoption, assisted reproduction, surrogacy or affective and caring bonds not necessarily mediated by biological ties (Meirinho et al., 2024). The emergence and consolidation of these family structures responds to multiple interrelated factors such as normative advances in civil rights, growing social sensitivity to sexual and gender dissidence, the development of reproductive technologies and, above all, the ethical and political questioning of exclusionary family models (Manning and Gustafson, 2025).

In the Spanish case, a fundamental milestone was the approval of Law 13/2005, of July 1, 2005, which amended the Civil Code to allow same-sex marriage. This legislation made Spain the third country in the world to legally recognize this right, marking a before and after in the legal and social conception of the family (Choi et al., 2025). As stated in the law's explanatory memorandum, the legislator recognized that society had evolved in its conception of affective and family relationships, and that it was therefore imperative to guarantee the legal equality of all couples, thus banishing historical prejudices and deep-rooted discriminatory patterns (Law 13/2005, 2005).

Currently, equal marriage is recognized in at least 39 countries, evidencing a global trend toward inclusion and recognition of diverse family forms (Kuźelewska et al., 2024). According to the latest data published in the National Institute of Statistics (INE, 2024), in Spain, this regulatory evolution has been accompanied by a sustained growth in the number of same-sex marriages since 2013. Moreover, such unions now represent 4% of all registered marriages in the country, reflecting not only a demographic shift, but also the growing desire of many same-sex couples to exercise parenthood. However, it is important to emphasize that marriage does not necessarily entail the intention of forming a family with children (Sánchez et al., 2004). Many same-sex couples choose to marry as an expression of their affective commitment, without this implying a parental project.

This phenomenon is not exclusive to the Spanish context. Similar expansion has been reported in countries such as Canada and Australia (Patterson et al., 2021; Rault, 2023). Thus, same-parent families are no longer a statistical exception or an emerging phenomenon, but a consolidated reality that challenges public policies, social protection systems and the theoretical frameworks from which parenting and parentality have historically been analyzed.

In this scenario of family diversification, the analysis of the *family dynamics* adopted by homosexual parental figures takes on special relevance. Family dynamics are understood as those patterns of interaction, norms, affection and educational strategies that are

implemented in day-to-day parenting (Darling and Steinberg, 1993). In order to adequately understand the specificity of parenting in same-parent contexts, it is essential to briefly review the conceptual foundations of family dynamics in general.

The study of family dynamics has historically been linked to the model suggested by the author Baumrind (1967, 1971), who identified three main categories based on two dimensions: demand (control) and responsiveness (affection). Thus, he established the authoritarian style (high control, low affect), the permissive style (low control, high affect) and the democratic style (high control, high affect). Later, Maccoby and Martin (1983) extended this model by adding a fourth category: the neglectful or indifferent style (low control, low affect). Several studies have shown that the democratic style is the one linked to better outcomes in psychological adjustment, highlighting high levels of self-esteem, social competence and school performance (Baumrind, 1991; Khanum et al., 2023; Lamborn et al., 1991; Wang et al., 2022), while authoritarian, permissive or neglectful styles tend to correlate with difficulties in emotional self-regulation, problem behaviors and greater psychological vulnerability (Deng and Tong, 2020; Musitu and Garcia, 2004; Steinberg, 2001).

However, it is important to emphasize that these typologies derive from studies conducted mainly with heteroparental families, which has generated a normative bias that limits the understanding of other family configurations. In response to this limitation, in recent decades a critical current has emerged that claims the need to address family dynamics from a more inclusive, contextual and sensitive to family and cultural diversity perspective (Palkovitz et al., 2014). This line of thought rejects the idea that there is a single valid parenting model and advocates a plural understanding of parenting, taking into account family structures, the life trajectories of its members and the sociocultural conditions in which they are inserted.

In line with this critical view, it is pertinent to highlight that the initial research on same-parent families focused primarily on children born from previous heterosexual relationships, subsequently raised by one of their parental figures after going public with their sexual orientation. However, in recent times there has been an increase in the number of planned homoparental families, i.e., constituted with the explicit will to assume parenting as a same-sex couple (Berkowitz, 2020). This transformation in the modes of family constitution evidences the need to update the focus of analysis on family dynamics, adapting it to the new realities of diverse parenthood and providing theoretical and methodological tools that allow for an assessment of the parental exercise without prejudices or heteronormative assumptions.

Despite these advances, sociocultural resistance persists towards certain forms of homoparentality, particularly towards two-parent families. As Golombok (2015) warns, this type of families continues to be perceived as especially transgressive, due to the fact that it clashes with the ingrained social imaginary that associates care with the feminine. Along these lines, Biblarz and Stacey (2010) argue that gay fathers subvert traditional gender norms, challenging the idea that mothers and fathers play essentially distinct parental roles. This binary and hierarchical view of care has historically been reproduced by key institutions such as medicine, education and law, perpetuating the symbolic delegitimization of gay men's parental competencies.

In the face of these prejudices, scientific evidence has consistently shown that the sexual orientation of parental figures does not negatively affect the psychosocial development of children and adolescents, hereafter referred to as children and adolescents

(e.g., Carone et al., 2024, 2025). In their review, Fagan et al. (2014) conclude that the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of parenting—the quality of bonding, affective involvement, and disciplinary practices—are equally effective regardless of the gender or orientation of those who parent. Moreover, although mothers and fathers may share similar educational values, it is common for their forms of implementation to vary, influenced by their biographies, backgrounds, and the cultural frameworks they inhabit (Lansford, 2022; Palkovitz et al., 2014). This diversity does not imply a deviation from a normative ideal, but a legitimate expression of the plurality of ways of being a mother or father (Yaffe, 2023).

However, it should be emphasized that much of the research on same-parent families has historically focused on same-sex parent couples, exploring their reproductive processes, the impact of the legal context on their well-being, and the educational trajectories of their children (Bos and Gartrell, 2020). However, it was not until the beginning of the new millennium that an academic interest in gay fathers as active actors in parenting began to emerge, with greater systematicity (Riggs and Due, 2014). This prolonged absence of attention has generated significant gaps in the literature, which hinder the construction of public policies sensitive to parental diversity and hinder a more complete understanding of parenting experiences in non-normative contexts (Montes et al., 2016).

In this context, the present study is based on a triple interrelated motivation. On the one hand, it responds to the academic interest in deepening the knowledge of same-parent families from the perspective of their internal dynamics, still little explored in the specialized literature. On the other hand, it seeks to provide an empirical and theoretical basis that contributes to the design of inclusive family, social and community interventions. Finally, it is part of an ethical commitment to social justice, aimed at recognizing and legitimizing all forms of parenting.

From this approach, this article presents a systematic review of the scientific literature on family dynamics in same-parent families. The general objective is to explore how such family dynamics are configured in non-heteronormative family contexts. To this end, four specific objectives are proposed: (1) to describe the methodological and sociodemographic characteristics of the studies reviewed; (2) to analyze the predominant family dynamics, taking into account educational practices and emotional ties; (3) to examine the socio-educational impact of homoparentality, including experiences of discrimination; and (4) to evaluate the emotional, behavioral and social adjustment of children raised in these families.

## Method

A systematic literature review was performed following a transparent and replicable protocol for the identification and selection of studies, in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021). An in-depth qualitative analysis was also carried out, which included a detailed examination, critical interpretation and rigorous reflection on the selected articles.

### Materials

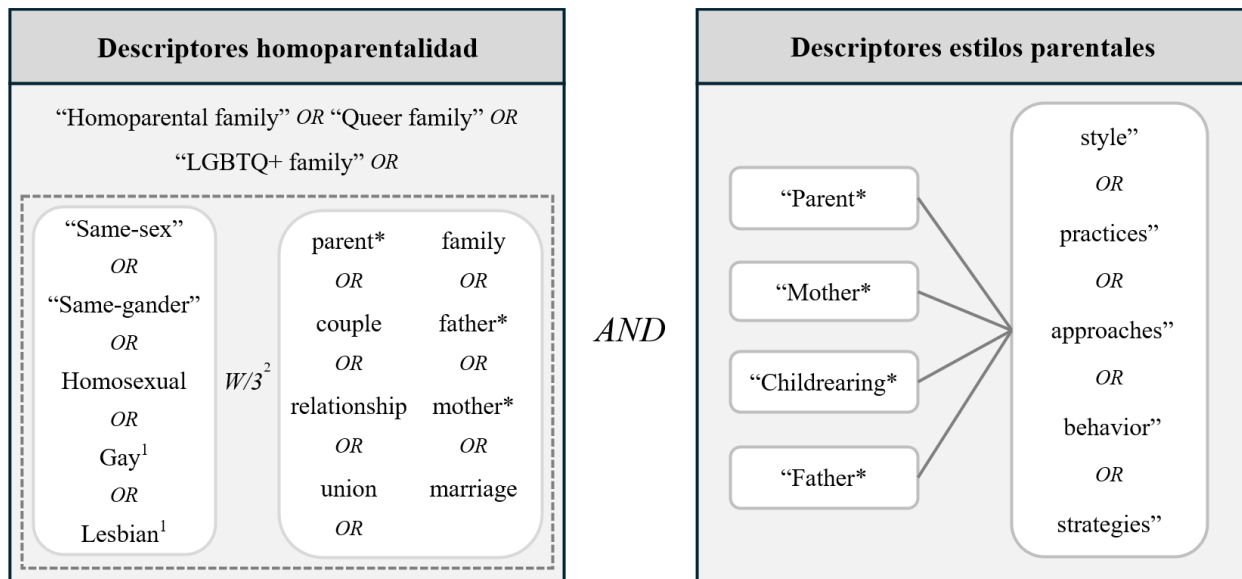
The systematic review included 17 articles dealing with empirical studies published in academic journals and with full access. Consequently, other documents such as theoretical articles, literature reviews, books, book chapters, letters to the editor and conference proceedings were excluded. No time restriction was applied in the search in order to maximize the collection of relevant literature on this area of research. The languages accepted were English, Spanish and Portuguese, in order to cover a wider geographical and cultural representation of the studies included.

### Procedure

The first phase of the process consisted of defining the focus of the study and preparing a systematic review protocol, which included key methodological aspects. First, no time restriction period was established in order to maximize the collection of relevant literature on this area of research. Only empirical articles published in peer-reviewed academic scientific journals were considered. As for the documentary sources, only journals indexed in databases of international prestige, such as Web of Science (WOS), Scopus and ProQuest, were selected. These directories guarantee the scientific quality of the material consulted, given their rigorous editorial evaluation process (Harzing and Alakangas, 2016; ProQuest Central, 2025). Publications in Spanish and English were considered, the latter being the predominant language in international scientific production (O'Neil, 2018). In addition, following the suggestion of a recent meta-analysis on the subject (Carone et al., 2025), studies in Portuguese were also included. The search was conducted in November 2024, and focused on identifying relevant articles from the titles, abstracts and keywords available in the selected databases.

After defining the protocol, the search for descriptors in the databases was carried out using a Boolean strategy, following the scheme detailed in Figure 1 (see Annex I for the complete search codes). Two thematic descriptors were included: homoparentality and family dynamics. These two themes were combined using the *AND* operator, requiring at least one descriptor for each theme in the article (e.g., "homoparental family" AND "Parent\* style"). In addition, descriptors within each topic were combined using the *OR* operator, meaning that any descriptor within the topic was acceptable (e.g., "parent\* style" OR "parent\* practices" OR "parent\* approaches"). For the combination of terms that usually appear together, the proximity operators *W/n* or *NEAR/n* were used depending on the database (see Figure 1). The "\*" truncator was also applied, allowing the identification of lexical variations of each term.

**Figure 1**  
Diagram of descriptors and logical operators



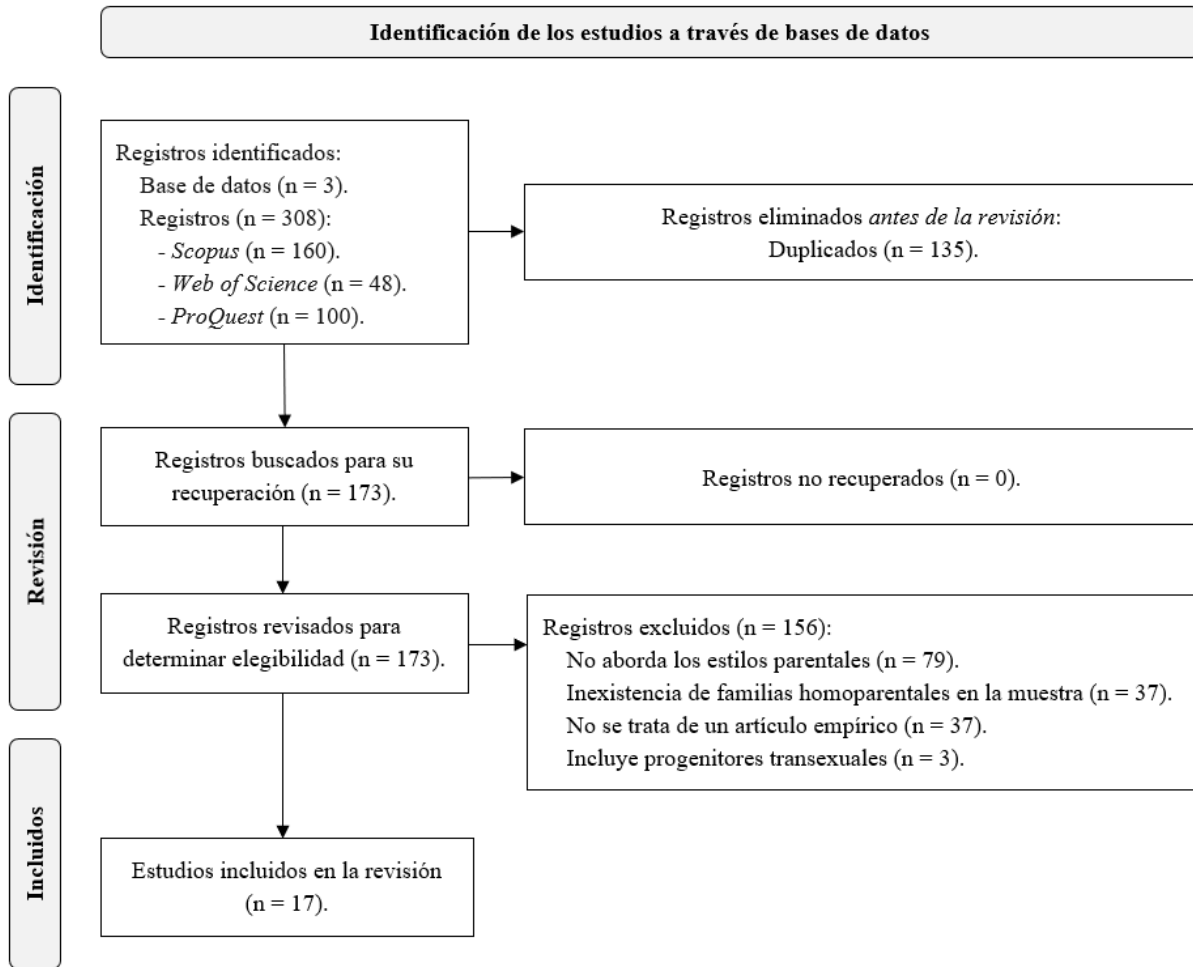
<sup>1</sup> "Gay" was combined with all words except "mother\*" and "lesbian" was combined with all words except "father\*".

<sup>2</sup> W/3 was used in Scopus and NEAR/3 in Web of Science and ProQuest. The proximity operators W/n (within n) and NEAR/n indicate that a word must not be separated from another word by more than (n) words. For example, if we use the search "same-sex W/3 family", the W/3 operator states that *same-sex* and *family* can be separated by a maximum of three words within the text. Thus, the results will include phrases such as "same-sex family", "same-sex adoptive family" or "same-sex couples raising a family".

Equivalent methodological filters were established in the searches of the three databases. Regarding research areas, Scopus included *Psychology*, *Social Sciences* and *Health Professions*; WOS selected *Psychology* and *Behavioral Sciences*; and ProQuest filtered by scientific journals from the social and health fields. Regarding the type of document, only articles and reviews were included in Scopus and WOS, while in ProQuest the main articles were prioritized. Finally, with regard to language, publications in English, Spanish or Portuguese were included.

This search resulted in a total of 308 potentially relevant articles (see Figure 2). From the initial set of 308 articles, 135 duplicates were identified and eliminated, resulting in a total of 173 articles for the review phase. In this phase, the titles and abstracts of the articles were read and evaluated to determine their eligibility for this systematic review. For this purpose, the following inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. All empirical articles that specifically addressed family dynamics in same-parent families were included. On the contrary, all articles that did not have an empirical focus, articles that did not cover family dynamics and those that included transgender parental figures or that did not include homoparental families in their own sample were eliminated. The final selection was made up of a total of 17 articles.

**Figure 2**  
Flowchart of searches and databases



## Information analysis

A database integrating the 17 selected articles was constructed. In addition to the bibliometric data acquired from Scopus, WOS and ProQuest (i.e., authors, title, year of publication, journal, etc.), key information was identified and manually coded for each article: sample unit, sample size, subdivided according to gender and sexual orientation of the parental figures, family structure, mean age of the sample broken down into adults and children, method of conception of same-parent families and other sociodemographic questions (i.e., city -country- of residence, area of residence, race, religion, economic income, educational level, etc.), city -country- of residence, area of residence, race, religion, economic income, educational level). In addition, the object of the study, the family dynamics, the evaluation instruments, the main results divided according to whether they were related to the parental figures or to the children and proposals for improvement of the study were codified. Subsequently, a thematic content analysis was carried out to group and systematize the findings according to previously defined analytical categories.

## Results

The results of this systematic review are presented below, based on a descriptive and thematic analysis of the 17 studies selected. The information is organized in two blocks: the first examines the methodological and sampling characteristics of the studies, and the second examines in depth the family dynamics observed in same-parent families, as well as their impact on child well-being and the proposals for improvement identified.

### **Descriptive analysis of selected studies**

Table 1 summarizes the main methodological characteristics of the 17 studies reviewed, organized chronologically and classified according to sample unit, sexual orientation of the parental figures, method of family formation and objectives related to family dynamics.

#### ***Time distribution of studies***

An analysis of the temporal evolution of the articles reviewed allows us to identify a research trajectory that is still incipient and concentrated in recent years (see Table 1). Although the first pioneering work dates back to 1992, with a second publication in 1995, for more than a decade there has been a significant gap in the scientific production on family dynamics in same-parent families. It was not until 2008 that publications were resumed, with three studies between that year and 2011. However, the turning point comes in 2017. From then until 2024, 70.6% of the articles analyzed are concentrated in this area, which shows a notable increase in academic interest in this subject.

This upward trend can be linked to various contextual factors, such as the legal recognition of same-parent families in many countries or the progressive inclusion of these family configurations in the discourse of rights and public policies. From this recent boom, we identify not only a quantitative increase in publications, but also a diversification of theoretical and methodological approaches, including the use of classical typologies (e.g., Baumrind, 1971) and the incorporation of new, more inclusive perspectives, where parental figures support parenting supported by gender diversity and sexuality (e.g., Ullman et al., 2022).

**Table 1***Main characteristics of the articles included in the review*

<b>Authors (year)</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Sexual orientation (n)</b>	<b>Method of conception (n)<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Objectives related to family dynamics</b>
Bigner and Jacobsen (1992)	Parents	Gays (24) Straight (29)	NA (24)	Exploring attitudes toward parenting and responses to child behavior
Brewaeys et al. (1995)	Mothers	Lesbians (100)	Artificial insemination (50) Social Mothers and partners of the above (50)	To analyze the distribution of parental roles and the degree of equity in educational and caregiving functions.
Ryan (2008)	Families	Lesbians (60) Gays (34)	Adoption (94)	To examine parenting skills related to creativity support, frustration tolerance, shared decision making, and participation in play activities.
Shechner et al. (2010)	Mothers	Lesbians (30) Single straight women (30) Heterosexuals with partner (30)	Artificial insemination (30)	To describe parental stress and perception of social support in same-parent families.
Rothmann (2011)	Parents	Gays (12)	Previous heterosexual relationship (12)	To identify equitable and androgynous parenting practices in homosexual parents and their relationship to traditional gender roles.
Abraham et al. (2017)	Families	Gays (22) Straight (20)	Surrogacy (22)	Distinguishing collaborative and undermining co-parenting styles in same-parent families.
Ó Súilleabháin (2017)	Parents	Gays (7)	Previous heterosexual relationship (4) Artificial insemination with parental agreement (1) Foster care (2)	Characterize an inclusive parenting model based on mutual decision-making, co-responsibility and the absence of traditional parental roles.
Sorainen et al. (2017)	Mothers	Lesbians (NA)	NA	To analyze how non-normative sexualities, diverse family configurations and parenting practices play out in the neo-traditionalist context of contemporary Russia.
Salinas-Quiroz et al. (2018)	Families	Lesbians (2) Gays (1)	Artificial insemination (2) Adoption (1)	To detect sensitive parental practices oriented to affective development, emotional availability, child perspective taking and co-responsibility.
Bartulovic and Kusevic (2020)	Families	Gays (1)	Surrogacy (1)	To examine how the visibility and participation of LGBTIQ parental figures in the school setting relate to their family dynamics.
Neresheimer and Daum (2021)	Families	Gays (35) Straight (33)	Previous heterosexual relationship (3) Adoption (1) Foster care (6) Surrogacy (25)	To assess levels of warmth and cooperation in homosexual parents in the context of parenting.
Da Mata and Scorsolini-Comin (2022)	Families	Lesbians (2) Gays (4)	Adoption (6)	To verify the influence of the parental models of origin in the construction of styles based on affective bonds and respectful practices.

<b>Authors (year)</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Sexual orientation (n)</b>	<b>Method of conception (n)<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Objectives related to family dynamics</b>
Goldberg and Virginia (2022)	Families	Lesbians (20) Gays (20) Straight (20)	Adoption (40)	To recognize the communicative styles used by parental figures according to the perception of maturity of the child.
Ogaki and Piccinini (2022)	Parents	Gays (4)	Adoption (2) Surrogacy (2)	Sorting out the equitable distribution of care, sensitive attention and boundary setting in non-gendered parenting contexts.
Baiocco et al. (2023)	Families	Lesbians (30) Gays (25) Straight (21)	NA (55)	Delineate the parental dimensions of warmth, hostility and rejection in the relationship with sons and daughters.
Holland-Muter (2023)	Mothers	Lesbians (2)	Previous heterosexual relationship (2)	Refuting how lesbian mothers manage the tension between public conformity to normative motherhood and private living of their lesbian identity.
D'Amore et al. (2024)	Families	Gays (67) Straight (67)	Surrogacy (67)	To compare authoritarian, permissive and democratic family dynamics between homosexual and heterosexual parental figures.

*Note.* NA = information *not available* in the article.

<sup>1</sup> This variable is only specified for same-parent families.

## **Methodological approaches used**

There was a notable diversity in the methodological approaches used in the studies reviewed: 47.1% of the studies adopted qualitative methodologies, 41.2% quantitative approaches and 11.8% combined both perspectives. This highlights the complex, relational and multidimensional nature of the study of same-parent families, requiring a variety of tools to capture family dynamics and psychological adjustment processes.

On the one hand, quantitative studies make use of a wide variety of psychometric instruments to assess family dynamics. The *Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire* (PSDQ) was used by D'Amore et al. (2024) to explore the authoritative, authoritarian and permissive dimensions of parenting. There is also the *Parents as Teachers Inventory* (PAAT), used by Ryan (2008), focused on the assessment of parenting practices from a child development support perspective. Baiocco et al. (2023) use the *Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire* (PARQ) to assess parental control behavior. Likewise, Bigner and Jacobsen (1992) developed and applied two specific instruments: the *Adult Responses to Child Behavior* (ARC-B) and the *Attitudes Toward Fathering* (ATF), aimed at capturing attitudes and behaviors related to the paternal role. This variety is evidence of the lack of a predominant standardized instrument, which makes systematic comparison between studies difficult and suggests methodological fragmentation within the field.

In relation to the evaluation of aspects related to children and adolescents, there is also a significant diversity of instruments, which can be grouped according to the type of variable they measure. For behavioral and emotional adjustment, the use of the *Child Behavior Checklist* (Abraham et al., 2017; D'Amore et al., 2024) stands out, as well as the *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire* (SDQ), employed by Baiocco et al. (2023). Ryan's (2008) study, on the other hand, uses the *Behavior and Emotion Rating Scale* (BERS) for similar purposes. Regarding the assessment of attachment and affective interaction, Salinas-Quiroz et al. (2018) apply the *Maternal Behavior Q-Sort* (MBQS) to be able to analyze maternal behavior and the *Attachment Q-Sort* (AQS) to enable the assessment of infant attachment. Regarding child temperament, Neresheimer and Daum (2021) employ a battery of specific instruments such as the *Infant Behavior Questionnaire-Revised* (IBQ-R), the *Early Childhood Questionnaire* (ECQ), the *Children's Behavior Questionnaire* (CBQ), the *Temperament in Middle Childhood Questionnaire* (TMCQ) and, ultimately, the *Early Adolescent Temperament Questionnaire-Revised* (EATQ-R).

Other studies have opted for instruments oriented to the assessment of parental well-being and stress, such as the *Brief Symptom Inventory* (BSI), the *Satisfaction With Life Scale* (SWLS), the *Affect Balance Scale* (ABS), the *Parental Stress Index-Short Form* (PSI-SF) and the *Social Network Questionnaire*, used jointly by Shechner et al. (2010). Instruments related to coparenting and family environment are also identified, such as the *Coparenting Scale* (D'Amore et al., 2024), the *Coparenting Relationship Scale* (CRS) and its version of the *Coparenting Relationship Scale of the Parenting Research and Practice Network* (Abraham et al., 2017), as well as the *Who Does What* (WDW) and the *Family Antigay Microaggressions Scale* (D'Amore et al., 2024). Finally, the assessment of parental personality was addressed using the *NEO-FFI-3* in the study by Neresheimer and Daum (2021), while the *Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support* (MSPSS) was used by D'Amore et al. (2024) to measure perceived social support.

On the other hand, qualitative studies employ techniques such as individual or group interviews, as well as biographical accounts and thematic analysis, in order to explore in depth the experiences, meanings and family dynamics within homoparental

contexts. This approach has been widely used in research that prioritizes participants' voice and contextualized understanding of their life trajectories (e.g., Bartulovic and Kusevic, 2020; Brewaeys et al., 1995; Goldberg and Virginia, 2022; Holland-Muter, 2023; Ó Súilleabháin, 2017).

### ***Sample characteristics***

Regarding the sampling unit, some studies adopt a relational approach, focusing on the family as a system ( $n=8$ ), while others focus on the individual experiences of one of the parental figures ( $n=9$ ). While the earlier, older works tended to prioritize an individual approach, more recent studies tend toward a relational perspective, reflecting a progressive consolidation of systemic approaches that consider the interdependence of family ties (see Table 1). Relational approach studies allow to capture in an integrated way the affective dynamics within the homoparental family nucleus, including both adult figures and NNAs (e.g., Abraham et al., 2017; Baiocco et al., 2023; Goldberg and Virginia, 2022). On the other hand, studies with an individual focus delve into the subjective experiences of homosexual mothers or fathers, exploring their parenting practices, their identity trajectories and the tensions derived from social contexts marked by heteronormativity (e.g., Bartulovic and Kusevic, 2020; Rothmann, 2011).

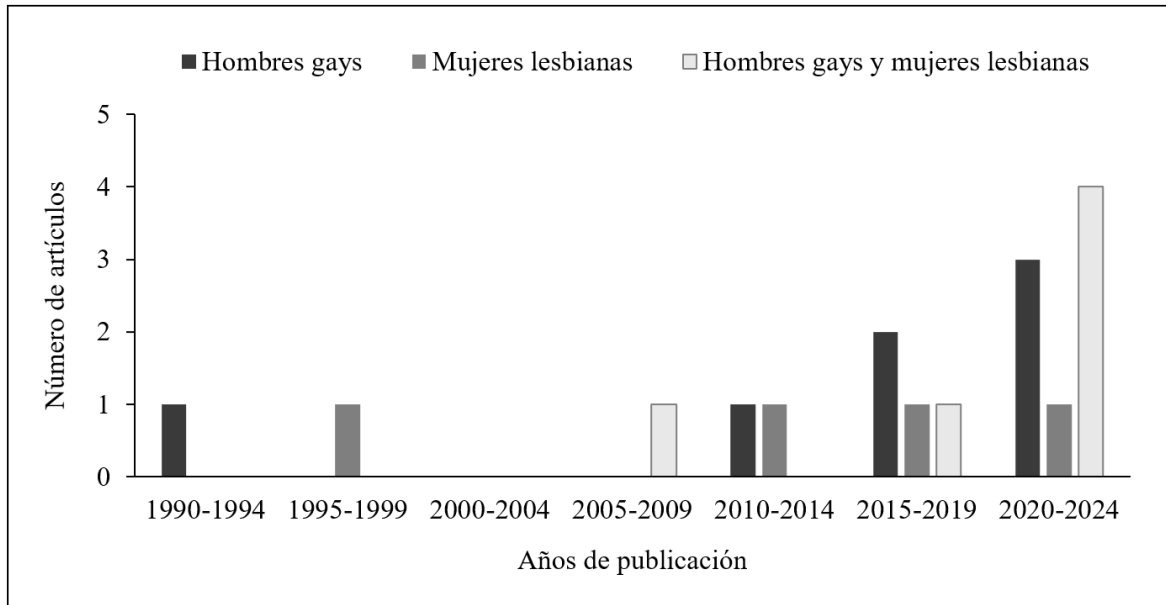
Regarding sample size, the studies show a large variability, ranging from 1 to 134 participants ( $M=47$ ,  $SD=43.5$ ). This diversity is related to the methodological approaches adopted: qualitative studies, focused on in-depth and contextualized narratives, use small samples, while quantitative research opts for large samples to favor comparison and generalization (see Table 1). Intermediate studies that balance representativeness and analytical depth are also identified (Abraham et al., 2017).

Regarding the gender and sexual orientation of the participants (see Figure 3), 41.2% of the studies focus exclusively on gay men, while 23.5% focus exclusively on lesbian women. Likewise, 35.3% included both parental profiles in their samples, making possible a comparative approach between genders and sexual orientations, as well as a much more inclusive representation of the diverse trajectories towards parenthood in non-heteronormative contexts.

This predominance of research focused on gay men is not accidental, but responds to a historical trend in the scientific literature, which has shown a sustained interest in male homoparental paternities (e.g., Bartulovic and Kusevic, 2020; Ogaki and Piccinini, 2022). However, the presence of lesbian women in the scientific literature, although smaller, have also generated important contributions on non-heteronormative maternities, especially with the processes of conception, division of parental labor, and the experience of social stigma (e.g., Holland-Muter, 2023; Sorainen et al., 2017). This analytical openness has intensified especially since 2020 when we see a greater concentration of studies focusing on both gay men and lesbian women. A representative example is the study by D'Amore et al. (2024), which, with a large and diverse sample, allows for an intersectional analysis of how gender, sexual orientation and family structure intersect in parenting practices.

### **Figure 3**

*Items based on gender and sexual orientation of the parental figures*



This progressive broadening of the research focus toward greater family diversity is also evidenced by the inclusion of comparison groups formed by heterosexual fathers and/or mothers, present in 6 of the 17 studies reviewed. Of these studies, four were published as of 2017 and adopt a methodological perspective focused on the family as the unit of analysis, indicating an evolution towards more integrative and comparative approaches. Comparisons with heteroparental families make it possible to identify similarities and differences in parenting practices and levels of child adjustment, thus contributing to dismantle social stigmas and to make visible the equivalence of parenting skills regardless of sexual orientation.

Finally, the ages of the parental figures and their sons and daughters in the studies reviewed were examined. Of the 17 articles, 14 specify the age of the parents, with means ranging from 32 years (Brewaeys et al., 1995) to 67 years (Rothmann, 2011). The majority (78.6%) are between 30 and 45 years of age, a stage associated with emotional stability and consolidation of family projects (Mehta et al., 2020). Other studies reached 48.11 years on average (Baiocco et al., 2023) or "50-something" (Bartulovic and Kusevic, 2020). The work of Rothmann (2011) represents an exceptional case, with parental figures whose average age reaches 67 years, highlighting also the large internal dispersion of the sample, with participants ranging from 30 to over 70 years of age. Thus, it can be affirmed that, although most of the studies are situated in the middle adult age range, there is significant inter- and intra-sample variability, which shows the diversity of trajectories towards parenthood in homoparental contexts.

With regard to the mean age of the children included in the samples, 12 of the 17 studies reviewed provided this data, showing considerable diversity. Ages ranged from 5.46 months (Abraham et al., 2017) to 25 years (Rothmann, 2011), although the latter is considered an outlier as it focuses on already adult individuals. Excluding it, the range is up to 12.37 years (Goldberg and Virginia, 2022), which allows the studies to be grouped into three evolutionary blocks. First, six papers address early childhood and preschool (Abraham et al., 2017; Da Mata and Scorsolini-Comin, 2022; D'Amore et al., 2024; Ogaki and Piccinini, 2022; Salinas-Quiroz et al., 2018; Shechner et al., 2010). Four studies are situated at the school stage (Baiocco et al., 2023; Bartulovic and Kusevic, 2020; Neresheimer and Daum, 2021; Ryan, 2008), while only one focuses on early adolescence (Goldberg and Virginia, 2022).

## ***Methods of conception***

The studies reviewed showed diverse pathways to parenthood. Artificial insemination (n=5) was especially frequent in female couples, while surrogacy (n=5) appeared as a recurrent route among gay men (see Table 1). Adoption represented a family formation strategy for both homosexual mothers and fathers. Likewise, parenthood was also accessed from previous heterosexual relationships (n=6). Only one article reported on foster care experiences. All this is evidence of diverse affective and reproductive trajectories.

## **Evidence on homoparental experience**

This section presents the main evidence on the same-parent experience, organized around four sub-themes: family dynamics, impact on daily life, child adjustment and proposals for improvement identified in the studies reviewed.

### ***Family dynamics in homoparental families***

The studies reviewed show a remarkable convergence in the characterization of family dynamics in same-parent families. 88.2% of the studies addressed this dimension, showing educational patterns that are based on solid emotional bonds, an equitable distribution of parental responsibilities and a sustained commitment to the upbringing and development of children. The remaining two papers do not explicitly address family dynamics, but were included because they address key dimensions linked to same-parent parenthood. Bigner and Jacobsen (1992) examined adults' responses to child behavior and their attitudes toward parenting, dimensions that allow valuable inferences about the educational practices and normative frameworks from which parental figures exercise their role. On the other hand, Bartulovic and Kusevic (2020) focused on the visibility and school participation of gay parents, providing a contextual perspective on the exercise of parenting in institutional settings.

One of the most reiterated findings in the literature refers to the trend towards inclusive parenting, in which gender roles cease to operate as the organizing gears of family life. The traditional dichotomies between "mother" and "father" are progressively dissolving, giving way to a functional distribution of parental responsibilities based on availability, individual skills and continuous negotiation between partners. This is evident in the study by Ogaki and Piccinini (2022), who, through a qualitative approach with parental figures in southern Brazil, observed that parental roles were not assigned based on gender, but on affinity, ability and practical household organization. Complementarily, Rothmann (2011) analyzed South African gay male couples, highlighting the importance of equity, consensus and flexibility in the organization of domestic life. Likewise, Ó Súilleabháin (2017), in a work developed in Ireland with lesbian mothers, evidenced how these families rejected traditional binary schemes and constructed parenting from determined relational arrangements.

From the framework of the classical typology of family dynamics, several empirical studies agree in identifying a predominance of the democratic style in same-parent families, defined by the combination of high expectations, inductive reasoning, affection and emotional support (Baiocco et al., 2023; D'Amore et al., 2024; Ryan, 2008). In this regard, D'Amore et al. (2024), applying validated questionnaires to lesbian and

heterosexual families in Italy, found a greater inclination towards democratic practices in the former. Similarly, Baiocco et al. (2023), comparing gay, lesbian and heterosexual couples, found that homoparental families presented a more favorable balance between control and affection. Along the same lines, Ryan (2008) concluded that democratic parenting styles were associated with greater emotional strengths compared to normative samples.

However, permissive styles are also observed, especially in vulnerable families with precariousness, discrimination or lack of legal recognition. Ogaki and Piccinini (2022) show how some lesbian mothers adopt this strategy in response to stigma, prioritizing emotional containment and positive reinforcement. Rothmann (2011) stresses that certain flexibilities in the discipline should not be interpreted as structural failures, but as functional adaptations to the context.

From a relational and constructivist perspective, some qualitative studies have highlighted the situated and dynamic character of parental style in homoparental contexts. For example, Holland-Muter (2023), in her analysis with South African lesbian families, showed how parenting practices are constantly redefined according to life cycles, biographical experiences, and affective bonds. Da Mata and Scorsolini-Comin (2022), studying Brazilian gay parents, concluded that family dynamics are not rigidly defined, but emerge as negotiated responses to environmental demands and accumulated emotional learning.

Regarding co-parenting, the literature differentiates between collaborative and debilitating modes. In the case of same-parent families, the former, based on mutual respect, active coordination and trust, predominate. This is demonstrated by the study of Abraham et al. (2017), which identified a strong association between positive co-parenting, child well-being, and marital satisfaction, with caregiver sexual orientation exerting no negative effect.

The distribution of parental roles also reveals a functional organization not determined by gender. For example, Brewaeys et al. (1995) observed that in 60% of the families composed of lesbian mothers, the biological mother adopted a more central role, although most of the decisions and responsibilities were shared. In the case of families with gay parents, both members indistinctly assumed roles traditionally associated with motherhood or fatherhood, reinforcing a logic of co-responsibility based on competition, dialogue and affective involvement (Ogaki and Piccinini, 2022). Neresheimer and Daum (2021) also identify higher levels of warmth, cooperation and co-responsibility in homosexual couples, with no significant differences in the temperamental profiles of the children compared to heteroparental families.

In the field of intrafamily communication, Goldberg and Virginia (2022) propose a typology that contemplates four communicative styles, visible in both homoparental and heteroparental families: 1) open and progressive, 2) information-oriented, 3) limited and "hands off" and 4) delayed; depending on the child's perceived readiness. This classification reflects a remarkable capacity for parental adjustment and sensitivity, contributing to the construction of secure attachments and emotionally nurturing parenting environments.

From a comparative approach, several studies agree that there are no statistically significant differences between the parenting practices of homoparental and heteroparental families in terms of quality of care, child well-being or educational effectiveness (D'Amore et al., 2024; Neresheimer and Daum, 2021; Ryan, 2008).

### ***Impact of homoparentality on families***

Homoparenthood has produced profound transformations not only in the ways of exercising parenthood, but also in the way families relate to their social, legal and educational environment. One of the main effects of homoparenthood is its potential to destabilize the traditional symbolic order, especially with regard to the binary structure of parental roles. Although this dimension has been developed from the logic of parenting styles, here it is taken up again from the impact it has on social imaginaries and institutional structures. As Ó Súilleabháin (2017) notes, in contexts such as the Irish one, the visibility of homosexual fathers forces the resignification of the father figure beyond the provider-disciplinarian model, allowing a full reappropriation of the affective function, which historically had been awarded exclusively to the maternal figure.

This process is not without tensions. In more restrictive environments, such as South Africa, lesbian mothers face a double normative burden: on the one hand, they must demonstrate maternal competence under hegemonic "good mother" standards; on the other, they must negotiate their public visibility in a context where homophobia, racism, and classism converge (Holland-Muter, 2023). This tension not only affects adult figures, but also children and adolescents, who adopt strategies of invisibility or hypervisibility to protect themselves from stigma. Rothmann (2011) collects similar situations among South African gay fathers, who describe their fatherhood as a practice of affective resistance against the dominant patriarchal imaginary.

In the educational sphere, the impact of homoparentality is especially significant. Beyond access to the system, their active and visible presence generates a reconfiguration of school-family relations and an opportunity to transform pedagogical approaches to family diversity. Bartulovic and Kusevic (2020), in their research with gay parents in Croatia, show how their school involvement contributes to dismantle superficial "inclusive" policies and to install practices that recognize and celebrate the real diversity of the student body. Bigner and Jacobsen (1992) already pointed out in their pioneering studies that homosexual fathers not only participated actively in the academic life of their sons and daughters, but also reinforced the bond with the school through constant communication, which had an impact on the academic performance and self-esteem of the students. This engagement with educational institutions has also been documented by Goldberg and Virginia (2022), who highlight the ability of these families to generate genuine collaborative environments with faculty, especially in contexts where adoption has been the means of access to parenting.

Nevertheless, the same-sex parenting experience continues to be marked by structural and legally codified inequalities, especially in countries where legislation does not fully recognize same-sex shared parenting, such as in South Africa, Israel, and Russia (Holland-Muter, 2023; Rothman, 2011; Shechner et al., 2010; Sorainen et al., 2017). The absence of optimal legal frameworks generates situations of vulnerability, such as the impossibility of legally registering both parental figures, lack of protection in cases of breakup or death, and exclusion in medical or school decision-making settings (Sorainen et al., 2017). Faced with this scenario, homoparental families develop strategies of resistance and identity reconstruction. Some rely on informal support networks, such as the active role of maternal grandmothers, while others opt for the creation of coherent and affectively consistent family narratives.

### ***Emotional, behavioral and social adjustment of sons and daughters***

Child psychological adjustment is one of the most sensitive and, at the same time, most relevant dimensions for assessing the quality of parenting in diverse family contexts.

Although not all the studies reviewed explicitly include this variable, the available evidence (76.4% of the studies) is particularly enlightening. In general, the results point to a positive psychological adjustment in children belonging to families headed by homosexual parental figures. Several studies argue that these NNA not only show comparable levels of emotional well-being (Rothmann, 2011), social behavior (Abraham et al., 2017) and behavioral regulation (Bigner and Jacobsen, 1992) with respect to their peers raised in heterosexual families, but in certain indicators they even present superior results. This is documented in two studies, whose quantitative analyses reveal a lower prevalence of externalizing and internalizing behaviors in children from same-parent families (Abraham et al. 2017; D'Amore et al., 2024). From a neuroscientific perspective, Abraham et al. (2017) introduced an innovative dimension by analyzing the impact of collaborative *coparenting* on the brain configuration of parental figures. This activation underscores that the quality of coparental interaction-and not sexual orientation-is the true predictor of child behavioral adjustment.

Along the same lines, similar temperamental profiles were found between children raised in same-parent and heteroparental families (Neresheimer and Daum, 2021), which reinforces the idea that emotional development is not determined by the sexual orientation of the caregivers, but by the quality of the bond, parental sensitivity and the relational environment. Baiocco et al. (2023) reported significantly higher levels of prosociality and affective warmth in same-parent family interactions, which translates into empathetic, supportive and cooperative behaviors on the part of the children. Along with quantitative studies, qualitative research and provide a deeper insight into emotional adjustment, highlighting environments that favor secure attachment, autonomy, emotional expression and self-regulation from early ages (Ogaki and Piccinini, 2022; Salinas-Quiroz et al., 2018).

Other particularly significant findings come from research addressing specific evolutionary stages. Examining the transition through puberty in sons and daughters adopted by homosexual couples, it has been shown that the existence of open communication and flexible parenting acts as a protective factor against the challenges of this stage (Goldberg and Virginia, 2022). Likewise, from the testimony of adults who grew up in homoparental families, profoundly positive subjective perceptions have been collected in relation to emotional openness, mutual respect and the absence of intrafamily discrimination (Bartulovic and Kusevic, 2020). Complementarily, Sorainen et al. (2017) analyzed the impact of disclosing the sexual orientation of parental figures on the quality of the filio-parental bond, concluding that this process, when handled carefully and affectionately, tends to strengthen communication and consolidate attachment.

### ***Suggestions for improvement highlighted in the reviewed articles***

The analysis of the proposals for improvement formulated in the studies reviewed reveals a shared concern for consolidating a theoretical, empirical and normative basis that makes parental experiences in homoparental contexts visible and promotes their recognition in the scientific, educational, legal and social spheres. Although not all the papers include explicit recommendations, it is possible to identify relevant contributions that have an impact on methodological, conceptual, institutional and political aspects.

Firstly, several authors highlight the need to broaden the samples and diversify their sociodemographic profiles. We advocate increasing the number of studies with greater statistical power, as well as the inclusion of comparative groups that allow contrasting the effects of parental style with other variables of the family and social

environment. This demand responds to the need to counteract the sampling biases still present and to avoid oversized conclusions from homogeneous or limited samples (Abraham et al., 2017; Baiocco et al., 2023; D'Amore et al., 2024; Neresheimer and Daum, 2021; Ryan, 2008; Shechner et al., 2010). It is also suggested to incorporate diverse geographical and cultural contexts, especially in regions of the Global South, where homoparental experiences are crossed by multiple axes of inequality.

Second, it emphasizes the importance of developing more inclusive and critical analytical frameworks capable of capturing the specificities of non-heteronormative family dynamics. It proposes to review traditional models of parenting, recognizing shared care practices, the dissolution of parental gender roles and the affective construction of authority (Da Mata and Scorsolini-Comin, 2022; Goldberg and Virginia, 2022; Ó Súilleabháin, 2017; Salinas-Quiroz et al., 2018). This theoretical review would make it possible to overcome normative approaches that tend to evaluate homoparentality from parameters that are alien to its relational and affective logic.

A third line of improvement points to the active incorporation of the voice of sons and daughters in research. It is pointed out that the systematic exclusion of children and adolescents in the methodological designs prevents us from accurately capturing the subjective effects of parental practices on their life trajectories. Therefore, there is an urgency to include their experiences through participatory methods (Holland-Muter, 2023; Rothmann, 2011; Sorainen et al., 2017). This inclusion would also make it possible to identify protective and risk factors from the perspective of those who directly live the same-parent experience.

In parallel, some studies propose improvements linked to the use of assessment instruments, recommending the cultural and conceptual adaptation of the scales used to assess family dynamics and psychological adjustment. These suggestions respond to the need to overcome normative approaches based on heteroparental nuclear family models, whose generalization may distort the results (Bigner and Jacobsen, 1992; Brewaeys et al., 1995; Ogaki and Piccinini, 2022). It is also suggested that specific tools be developed to consider family diversity as a structuring variable and not as an exception.

Finally, several articles highlight the importance of transcending the academic field to influence public policies, affective-sexual education and the training of professionals linked to childhood and family (Ó Súilleabháin, 2017; Goldberg and Virginia, 2022). From this perspective, Bartulovic and Kusevic (2020) call for a greater connection between scientific production and social transformation, suggesting that the knowledge generated around homoparental families should actively contribute to the depathologization of their experiences and the eradication of discriminatory discourses in school, health and legal contexts. In this regard, the design of institutional awareness programs, the inclusion of contents on family diversity in school curricula and the promotion of legal frameworks that guarantee equal rights are proposed.

## **Discussion and conclusions**

This work made it possible to explore, from a critical and comprehensive perspective, the way in which family dynamics are configured in same-parent families, making visible both their educational practices and the relational, emotional and social factors that are present in them. To this end, a systematic review of 17 empirical articles on this topic was carried out with the specific objectives of describing the methodological and sociodemographic characteristics of the studies reviewed; analyzing the predominant parental family dynamics; examining the social and educational impact of

homoparentality, including experiences of discrimination; and, finally, evaluating the emotional, behavioral and social adjustment of children raised in these families.

With respect to the first objective, which consists of describing the methodological and sociodemographic characteristics of the studies reviewed, the data allow us to conclude that research on parenting styles in same-parent families, although still limited in number, is in a phase of expansion. At the methodological level, a significant evolution is observed with respect to the first comparative approaches (Bigner and Jacobsen, 1992), with the incorporation of intersectional (Rothmann, 2011; Sorainen et al., 2017), neurobiological (Abraham et al., 2017) and hermeneutic-discursive (Holland-Muter, 2023) frameworks, which has allowed for a more complex analysis of homoparental realities.

Likewise, the studies show a remarkable heterogeneity in terms of approaches (individual vs. relational), sample sizes and parental profiles, with a predominance of those focused on gay men, although with a progressive inclusion of lesbian motherhood and mixed samples. The trajectories towards parenthood are diverse, which is evidence of the plurality of family models. As for the age of the participants, most of the parental figures are between 30 and 45 years old, while the children are concentrated in early childhood and school, which limits the longitudinal analysis. Finally, the relevance of diverse methodological approaches and the urgent need to move towards greater instrumental standardization are emphasized. The wide variety of techniques and instruments used, while enriching the field, makes it difficult to compare studies and highlights the need for specific tools adapted to the homoparental reality. This methodological richness, together with the challenges still present, consolidates the field of study as a scientifically fertile space, capable of providing solid empirical evidence in defense of equality, diversity and the legitimacy of all family models.

In relation to the second objective of analyzing the predominant family dynamics, among the main results, the repeated identification of democratic family dynamics in same-parent families stands out (Baiocco et al., 2023; D'Amore et al., 2024; Ryan, 2008). These styles are characterized by a combination of affection, consistent rule-setting, promotion of child autonomy and open, horizontal communication. In this sense, the parental practices observed reflect an ethical commitment to parenting, dissociating them from dysfunctional authoritarian or permissive models.

Studies also highlight the active involvement of homosexual parental figures in the daily lives of their sons and daughters, with particular emphasis on equal sharing of responsibilities, consensual decision making, and secure bonding (Abraham et al., 2017; Goldberg and Virginia, 2022; Neresheimer and Daum, 2021). These family configurations tend to be structured on collaborative logics, without gender hierarchies, which reinforces a sensitive, horizontal and deliberately chosen model of parenting.

Another relevant finding has to do with comparisons between homosexual and heterosexual families. Although similarities are predominant, patterns unique to same-parent families have been identified such as greater coparental collaboration, equal distribution of tasks, and the absence of traditional gender expectations (Brewaeyes et al., 1995; D'Amore et al., 2024; Neresheimer and Daum, 2021; Ogaki and Piccinini, 2022; Ó Súilleabháin, 2017). In contrast, some heteroparental families continue to reproduce more conventional patterns, with imbalances in the allocation of parental roles (Goldberg and Virginia, 2022; Shechner et al., 2010).

Regarding the third objective of this work, which revolves around examining the socio-educational impact of homoparentality, the studies reviewed show that these families transform their relationships with the institutional environment. The visibility of

homosexual parental figures challenges traditional parental roles, resignifying the father and mother figure in contexts marked by heteronormativity (Holland-Muter, 2023; Ó Súilleabháin, 2017; Rothmann, 2011). In the educational field, an active participation of homoparental families is highlighted, which favors collaborative links with teachers and promotes inclusive pedagogical practices (Bartulovic and Kusevic, 2020; Bigner and Jacobsen, 1992; Goldberg and Virginia, 2022). However, legal inequalities persist in countries where shared parenting is not fully recognized, leading to situations of legal and emotional vulnerability, such as in South Africa, Israel and Russia (Holland-Muter, 2023; Rothmann, 2011; Shechner et al., 2010; Sorainen et al., 2017). In the face of these barriers, families develop strategies of resilience and cohesion, such as support networks and strong family narratives, which reinforce their legitimacy and affective commitment (Da Mata and Scorsolini-Comin, 2022). Overall, homoparenthood is configured as a transformative experience that challenges social structures and promotes parenting models based on equity, sensitivity and affective justice.

In relation to the psychological adjustment of the children, reflected in the fourth and last objective of this study, the results are consistent: no unfavorable differences are observed with respect to children raised in heterosexual families. On the contrary, some studies report even higher indicators in areas such as prosociality, emotional openness or adaptive capacity (Baiocco et al., 2023; D'Amore et al., 2024; Neresheimer and Daum, 2021; Ryan, 2008). This makes it possible to delegitimize pathologizing discourses that question the parental suitability of LGTBIQ+ persons and underlines the potential of these family environments to ensure child well-being. This understanding of child adjustment has been enriched by studies with a qualitative perspective that have shown that in same-parent families warm affective relationships are built, emotional self-regulation is promoted from early ages and the experience of mutual respect is one of the structural bases of coexistence (Bartulovic and Kusevic, 2020; Ogaki and Piccinini, 2022; Salinas-Quiroz et al., 2018). The voice of sons and daughters, when incorporated, provides narratives centered on love received, emotional security and a sense of belonging, even in adverse social contexts.

This systematic review makes a significant contribution to the field of study of family dynamics in same-parent families by offering an updated and contextualized view of a still incipient but expanding corpus. First, it stands out for its ability to systematize recent findings on family dynamics in same-parent families, which allows not only a better understanding of the phenomenon from an empirical perspective, but also the identification of trends, gaps and persistent challenges. Secondly, the analysis of the 17 studies included highlights the value of democratic, co-responsible and affectively involved parenting practices, dismantling myths about the supposed disadvantage of these families and providing solid evidence that reinforces their legitimacy. This characterization, in turn, provides useful conceptual tools for the design of family, educational and community interventions that recognize family diversity without prejudice. Finally, this work promotes the development of an integrative perspective, by making visible the adaptation strategies in the face of restrictive social contexts, reinforcing the legitimacy of all parental configurations.

Nevertheless, and despite the relevant contributions of this review, it is necessary to recognize a series of limitations that condition the generalization and scope of the findings presented. First, the scarcity of empirical studies focused specifically on same-parent families and the remarkable heterogeneity of their methodological designs make it difficult to systematically compare research. Second, relevant sampling biases persist, such as the overrepresentation of gay men compared to other family configurations, as

well as limited geographic and sociocultural diversity, with little presence of contexts from the Global South. Added to this is the lack of standardization in the evaluation instruments used, which restricts the possibility of establishing solid conclusions at a cross-sectional level. Finally, it is worth noting the scarce inclusion of the direct voice of sons and daughters in many of the studies analyzed, which limits a complete understanding of the homoparental experience from an intergenerational perspective. In addition, there is a geographic concentration in urban and western contexts, which leaves out other homoparental experiences in rural or ethno-culturally diverse environments.

Based on the limitations identified, several lines of future research are outlined that could strengthen and expand knowledge about family dynamics in same-parent families from a more inclusive perspective. First, it is a priority to broaden the samples used in empirical studies and include longitudinal analyses, diversifying their sociodemographic profiles and increasing their statistical power. This would allow counteracting currently existing sampling biases, as well as incorporating meaningful comparisons with other family configurations. Along the same lines, it is recommended to include diverse geographical and cultural contexts, especially in regions of the Global South, where homoparental experiences are crossed by multiple structural inequalities that have not yet been explored.

Second, it proposes to critically review traditional theoretical frameworks on parenting, incorporating analytical approaches capable of recognizing the dissolution of gender roles, shared care practices and the affective construction of authority that characterize many of these families. Overcoming normative readings based on heteroparental models will make it possible to evaluate homoparenthood from its own relational and contextual logic (Da Silveira et al., 2024).

A third priority line is oriented towards the active incorporation of the children's voice in research, through the use of participatory methodologies. This inclusion would enrich the intergenerational understanding of family dynamics and would also contribute to the epistemological legitimization of the children's discourse, in addition to identifying protective and risk factors from the direct experience of children and adolescents. Likewise, there is a need to move towards the standardization and cultural adaptation of the instruments used to assess family dynamics and psychological adjustment, developing specific tools that consider family diversity as a structuring dimension of the analysis, and not as a marginal category.

Finally, future research should be committed to a transformative vocation that transcends academia, influencing public policies, educational programs and professional practices. In this sense, the articulation between scientific evidence and social action is advocated, with the aim of promoting egalitarian legal frameworks, an inclusive affective-sexual education and a professional training sensitive to family plurality. These future directions involve not only a methodological and theoretical challenge, but also an ethical commitment to social justice and full recognition of all legitimate forms of exercising parenthood (Gegenfurtner and Gebhardt, 2017).

In conclusion, this systematic review has allowed to consolidate and expand the existing knowledge on family dynamics in same-parent families, making visible committed, affective and competent parenting practices. Far from reproducing normative models, these families are a legitimate expression of human diversity and a model of parenting based on love, equality and resilience. Based on the analysis of recent empirical studies, its capacity to generate emotionally secure and socially functional family environments is reaffirmed, challenging ingrained stigmas and providing new ways of understanding parenting. In addition, this work highlights the importance of adopting

inclusive methodological approaches, incorporating the voice of sons and daughters, and contextualizing the analyses in theoretical frameworks that are sensitive to family plurality. Overall, the review not only expands the available knowledge on same-parent experiences, but also guides future lines of research and intervention from an intersectional, inclusive and committed to social justice approach.

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## Annex I

### Database search codes

#### Scopus advanced search code:

(TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Parent\* style" OR "Parent\* practices" OR "Parent\* approaches" OR "Parent\* behavior" OR "Parent\* strategies" OR "Mother\* style" OR "Mother\* practices" OR "Mother\* approaches" OR "Mother\* behavior" OR "Mother\* strategies" OR "Father\* style" OR "Father\* practices" OR "Father\* approaches" OR "Father\* behavior" OR "Father\* strategies" OR "Childrearing style" OR "Childrearing practices" OR "Childrearing approaches" OR "Childrearing behavior" OR "Childrearing strategies") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (("Same-sex" W/3 (parent\* OR couple OR relationship OR union OR family OR father\* OR mother\* OR marriage)) OR ("Same-gender" W/3 (parent\* OR couple OR relationship OR union OR family OR father\* OR mother\* OR marriage)) OR (gay W/3 (parent\* OR couple OR relationship OR union OR family OR father\* OR marriage)) OR (lesbian W/3 (parent\* OR couple OR relationship OR union OR family OR mother\* OR marriage)) OR (homosexual W/3 (parent\* OR couple OR relationship OR union OR family OR father\* OR mother\* OR marriage)) OR "Homoparental family" OR "Queer family" OR "LGBTQ+ family"))

#### Web of Science (WOS) advanced search code:

("Same-sex" NEAR/3 (parent\* OR couple OR relationship OR relationship OR union OR family OR father\* OR mother\* OR marriage)) OR ("Same-gender" NEAR/3 (parent\* OR couple OR relationship OR union OR family OR father\* OR mother\* OR marriage)) OR (Gay NEAR/3 (parent\* OR couple OR relationship OR union OR family OR father\* OR marriage)) OR (Lesbian NEAR/3 (parent\* OR couple OR relationship OR union OR family OR mother\* OR marriage)) OR (Homosexual NEAR/3 (parent\* OR couple OR relationship OR union OR family OR father\* OR mother\* OR marriage)) OR "Homoparental family" OR "Queer family" OR "LGBTQ+ family" (Topic) AND "Parent\* style" OR "Parent\* practices" OR "Parent\* approaches" OR "Parent\* behavior" OR "Parent\* strategies" OR "Mother\* style" OR "Mother\* practices" OR "Mother\* approaches" OR "Mother\* behavior" OR "Mother\* strategies" OR "Father\* style" OR "Father\* practices" OR "Father\* approaches" OR "Father\* behavior" OR "Father\* strategies" OR "Childrearing style" OR "Childrearing practices" OR "Childrearing approaches" OR "Childrearing behavior" OR "Childrearing strategies" (Topic) and Article or Review Article (Document Types) and English or Spanish (Languages)

#### ProQuest Advanced Search Code:

abstract(("Same-sex" NEAR/3 (parent\* OR couple OR relationship OR union OR family OR father\* OR mother\* OR marriage)) OR ("Same-gender" NEAR/3 (parent\* OR couple OR relationship OR union OR family OR father\* OR mother\* OR marriage)) OR (Gay NEAR/3 (parent\* OR couple OR relationship OR union OR family OR father\* OR marriage)) OR (Lesbian NEAR/3 (parent\* OR couple OR relationship OR union OR family OR father\* OR marriage)) OR (Lesbian NEAR/3 (parent\* OR couple OR relationship OR union OR family OR mother\* OR marriage)) OR (Homosexual NEAR/3 (parent\* OR couple OR relationship OR union OR family OR father\* OR mother\* OR marriage)) OR "Homoparental family" OR "Queer family" OR "LGBTQ+ family") AND abstract("Parent\* style" OR "Parent\* practices" OR "Parent\* approaches" OR "Parent\* behavior" OR "Parent\* strategies" OR "Mother\* style" OR "Mother\* practices" OR "Mother\* approaches" OR "Mother\* behavior" OR "Mother\* strategies" OR "Father\* style" OR "Father\* practices" OR "Father\* approaches" OR "Father\* behavior" OR "Father\* strategies" OR "Childrearing style" OR "Childrearing practices" OR "Childrearing approaches" OR "Childrearing behavior" OR "Childrearing strategies").

## **Stress, burnout, depersonalization, and personal fulfillment linked to mindfulness and gender among teachers in the Dominican Republic**

### **Estrés, agotamiento, despersonalización y realización personal vinculado al mindfulness y el género del profesorado en la República Dominicana**

**Janna Savery Figuereo Ramírez**

Universidad Internacional Iberoamericana (Dominican Republic)

[\[janna.figuero@gmail.com\]](mailto:janna.figuero@gmail.com)

**Mauricio Polanco Valenzuela**

Universidad Internacional Iberoamericana (Colombia)

[\[mauricio.polanco@unini.edu.mx\]](mailto:mauricio.polanco@unini.edu.mx) (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6225-5020>)

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#### **Manuscript information:**

**Received/Recibido:** 18/07/25

**Reviewed/Revisado:** 04/03/26

**Accepted:** 10/03/26

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#### **ABSTRACT**

**Key words:**

Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, stress, self-realization, mindfulness.

The aim of the article is to determine the levels of stress, burnout, depersonalization and personal fulfillment linked to mindfulness according to the gender of teachers in the Dominican Republic. The study was developed under a quantitative design, with a descriptive, cross-sectional scope in which a population-based census sample of 57 teachers was approached. Results: For the emotional exhaustion dimension, the highest levels were shown by the female group, corresponding to 84.60%. In the depersonalization dimension, men showed a slight tendency to higher levels, although it results in a low percentage (8.3%) compared to the female group that did not show the condition at this level. In personal fulfillment, the highest percentage is evidenced in both genders, 38.6% female and 12.3% male. Discussion: The results show that stress varies by gender, with the female group showing greater emotional exhaustion at all levels. For depersonalization the results place the sample at the low level, but with a slight tendency to be higher in men and a significant finding resulted in high self-actualization in both genders. Regarding mindfulness, the medium level predominates in both genders, constituting a potential indicator for strengthening. Whereas, women present more cases of high mindfulness, suggesting a greater receptivity or predisposition to this practice.

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#### **Resumen**

**Palabras clave:**

Agotamiento emocional, despersonalización, estrés, realización personal, mindfulness.

El objetivo del artículo se dirige a determinar los niveles de estrés, agotamiento, despersonalización y realización personal vinculado al mindfulness según el género del profesorado de la República Dominicana. El estudio se desarrolló bajo el diseño cuantitativo, con alcance descriptivo, transversal en el que se abordó una muestra censal poblacional de 57 docentes. Resultados: Para la dimensión agotamiento emocional, los niveles más altos los mostró el grupo femenino, correspondiente al 84,60%. En la dimensión despersonalización, los hombres mostraron una ligera tendencia a niveles más altos, aunque

resulta en un porcentaje bajo (8,3%) en comparación con el grupo femenino que no mostró la condición en este nivel. En la realización personal se evidencia el mayor porcentaje, en ambos géneros del 38.6% femenino y masculino 12.3%. Discusión: Los resultados evidencian que el estrés varía por género, ya que el grupo femenino mostró mayor agotamiento emocional en todos los niveles. Para la despersonalización los resultados ubican la muestra en el nivel bajo, pero con una ligera tendencia a ser más alta en hombres y un hallazgo significativo resultó en la alta realización personal en ambos géneros. En cuanto al mindfulness, predomina el nivel medio en ambos géneros, constituyendo un indicador potencial para el fortalecimiento. Mientras que, las mujeres presentan más casos de mindfulness alto, sugiriendo una mayor receptividad o predisposición a esta práctica.

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## **Introduction**

Stress is described as a state that exposes the organism to situations that demand extra effort, which exceeds individual conditions (Cabellos et al., 2020). This is generally produced when there is a disturbance in the normal functioning of the body, caused by an internal or external agent to which it reacts, to face situations that exceed the personal coping capacity (Takhdat et al., 2024). In these cases, stress develops progressively and arises from various circumstances that converge in its manifestation, related to an emotional phenomenon that impacts the personal, work, family and social environment and negatively affects the individual's physical and psychological environment (Torres, 2020).

In this framework, stress is characteristic of environments where workers are under certain levels of control, supervision, monitoring and continuous follow-up, which makes them feel pressured to achieve optimal performance in work productivity. This places the employee under considerable pressure which is assumed to be one of the significant contributing factors to the development of stress in all its dimensions.

From this perspective, it is estimated that teacher work-related stress is the second leading cause of absenteeism due to illness in the educational field. Albites (2019) states that "this condition, in addition to impacting the physical and psychological health of teachers, has a negative influence on educational organizations, since it generates absenteeism, low productivity, teaching and academic performance, demotivation, discouragement, etc." (p. 142).

These approaches are supported by Menghi and Oros and Manzano (2019) and Manzano (2020) who emphasize that daily academic practices involve an important pressure load, such as excessive concentration, reviewing tasks and activities, projecting and forcing the voice, standing for long periods of time, extended work schedules, taking shifts in different periods and places of the institution, etc. These factors contribute to the development of stress, exhaustion, depersonalization and, conversely, low personal fulfillment, as a result of the characteristics of the profession and the demands of the educational practice in the classroom (Hidalgo et al., 2019).

In addition, the educator must deal with a high degree of conflict, due to the multiplicity of tasks, to which is added with some frequency the devaluation of the work, the uncertainty and insecurity of permanence in the work and institutions, the ambivalence between what they want and what they can achieve, the attention to individual differences in front of a large student population, which can generate discipline problems or disruptive behaviors that exceed their performance in the classrooms (González et al., 2020).

Likewise, teachers are constantly exposed to emerging demands, such as repeated and mandatory educational reforms that often turn out to be unforeseen. In addition, academic and administrative work overload and various circumstances arising from interactions with the staff and management team. In addition, there are some factors that may arise with co-workers and parents (Correa, 2020). Similarly, teachers are affected by the need for self-training due to deficiencies in training, promotion, professionalization and economic development. In addition, there are factors caused by deficiencies and limitations in the physical structures and facilities, lack of teaching materials and didactic resources, which prevent an adequate response to the students' interests and classroom work (Rodríguez y Sánchez, 2018).

In this context, the Regional Bureau of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean reports that, despite the scarce research developed in the region on the working conditions and health of teachers, the findings represent a call for attention (OREALC/UNESCO, 2005) reports that, despite the scarce research developed in the region on the working conditions and health of teachers, the findings represent a call for attention, since information has been reported

regarding a negative impact on the mental health of the teaching population, manifested in illnesses such as stress, depression, anxiety, among other types of comorbidities.

In the context under study, the teaching staff of educational institutions in the Dominican Republic, according to the research developed by Veras (2020) reports evidence on the impact of stress on teachers and how it affects the quality of life, performance and general health conditions of these professionals. The results of the study allowed us to determine that teachers present certain levels of stress, due to various behavioral manifestations, highlighting anxiety and irritability in their dealings and even some experienced depression, reflected in the lack of compliance with the schedule, late arrivals, allowing students to leave before class time or absenting themselves from the institution, among other situations that occur daily in the classroom.

These findings have also been corroborated by the study of Bennisar et al. (2022) in which they indicate that some teachers have poor communication with management and co-workers, observe and attend to problematic and conflictive students. However, they overestimate the problems of others, exacerbating conflicts with the groups they serve. On the other hand, they show traits of fatigue, which cause a gradual loss of professional competencies, negatively affecting behavior that violates social relationships with members of the educational community, especially in teacher-student and teacher-teacher relationships.

On the other hand, it is highlighted that stress converges in three dimensions that are associated to determine its presence, such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and low personal fulfillment that make up a series of behaviors observed and common in the teachers of the context under study. In this regard, Shami et al. (2018) expresses that emotional exhaustion is manifested by low self-esteem, diminished immediate memory, extreme tiredness, low energy and motivation, impatience, a feeling of omnipotence in the capacity of attention and a progressive exhaustion that leads to emotions of impotence and frustration that reveal the presence of this type of affectation.

In addition to this, there is depersonalization, considered another pathology that can manifest itself in teachers, as a consequence of stress and emotional exhaustion. This is often manifested by an evident disconnection with the students, the presence of cold and distant attitudes, mechanical treatment due to the loss of empathy, which prevents consideration of individual needs or the emotional well-being of the individuals in the environment, resulting in feelings of guilt and certain types of depression (Bennisar, et al., 2022).

A decrease in personal fulfillment is also observed, accompanied by feelings of dissatisfaction, demotivation and an evident lack of interest in work performance; due to various circumstances (lack of recognition, scarcity of resources and autonomy in decision making, etc.), which leads teachers to perceive work as unrewarding and meaningless, which can result in conflictive work relationships and low levels of social support (Veras, 2020).

For her part, Collado (2018) stresses that the intensity of stress, personal exhaustion, depersonalization and low personal fulfillment not only have an impact on classroom work, but also affect development in all areas of teacher interaction, including the social and family spheres. This affects the various interrelationships within the educational environment, such as relations with management personnel, colleagues, parents and representatives, evidenced in reluctance to communicate, verbal complaints or psychological abuse, which do not go unnoticed when seeking solutions to everyday problems, without recognizing the errors and pedagogical and administrative deficiencies in their functions.

Given that this syndrome jeopardizes the well-being of teachers, the learning process and the quality of education, as well as the relationship with the educational community in general, it is essential to find ways to prevent stress, burnout, depersonalization and strengthen personal fulfillment. As confirmed by Tabares et al. (2020) "Stress in teachers constitutes one

of the main obstacles that interfere in the improvement of the quality of education and, therefore, requires timely and adequate scientific and professional attention" (p. 267).

This reality does not exclude educational institutions in the Dominican Republic, where, for some time now, behavioral manifestations similar to those mentioned above have been observed. In this context, it has become evident that stress, burnout and depersonalization have overtaken an important group of teachers, in whom a decrease in personal fulfillment has also been observed. This is considered to have arisen as a consequence of both the working conditions and the academic and administrative pressures to which these professionals are currently exposed, as they have had to face a considerable workload both inside and outside the classroom.

Taking into account that, in the targeted institutions, there is currently no principal since the 2022-2023 school year, so the administrative responsibilities fall on the coordinators and the teachers themselves. This leads them to perform multiple activities, which include, in addition to planning, organization, execution and development of classes, as well as the evaluation of each process, they must focus on the attention to the diversity and difficulties of the students, the maintenance of discipline, communication with parents, attendance to meetings and trainings. Therefore, it is considered that this set of responsibilities causes teachers in the institutions under analysis to feel physically and emotionally tired, generating psychological and emotional crises, low motivation, commitment and self-esteem, dissatisfaction, fatigue, desire to give up and abandon the job. This, in turn, generates exhaustion, alienation, depersonalization and physical and emotional imbalance that affects personal and professional performance.

In this sense, upon analyzing this set of situations, an interest arose in developing a research project to answer the following question: what are the levels of stress, burnout, depersonalization and personal fulfillment linked to mindfulness according to the gender of teachers in the Dominican Republic? In order to answer the question, the objective was to determine the levels of stress, burnout, depersonalization and personal fulfillment linked to mindfulness according to the gender of teachers in the Dominican Republic.

This study presupposes a high relevance in the current context, since through the results scientific data are provided on the dimensions of work stress and mindfulness according to the gender of teachers, with the purpose of establishing a clear diagnosis of the emotional health conditions faced by this population, which is important to provide effective solutions that contribute to promote the integral wellbeing of teachers towards the improvement of quality of life, which positively affects the optimization of academic performance within an adequate work environment, which in turn positively impacts the educational quality and school performance of students.

Likewise, the development of the study provides theoretical foundations to the field of study, due to the fact that in the context addressed there is little research that has been conducted to contribute to the improvement of the emotional health of teachers, which has generated a gap from the paradigmatic and conceptual point of view in the approach to work stress in teachers, which limits the understanding and deepening of the topic under study in this specific area.

## **Method**

According to the design, the research was developed under a quantitative approach with the objective of determining the levels of stress, burnout, depersonalization and personal fulfillment linked to mindfulness according to the gender of teachers in the Dominican Republic. The scope and depth of the study was descriptive, in line with the objective whose purpose is

to deepen the properties, characteristics and profiles of the individuals who made up the sample subject to analysis (Hernández y Mendoza, 2018). Thus, the descriptive study made it possible to focus the research on measuring or collecting information independently or jointly on the concepts and variables related to the topic under analysis.

Likewise, the research was assumed to be a cross-sectional study that facilitated the collection of data at a single, specific moment in time. The purpose of its application consisted of describing variables and analyzing their respective incidence and interrelation at a given time, facilitating the collection of information within a previously established period and time frame, from January to June 2025.

The universe of the study was represented by 57 teachers at the basic and secondary levels in the Dominican Republic, ensuring representativeness, professionals were included under the criteria of gender and age, through a non-probabilistic, intentional or convenience sampling approach, deciding to collect data from the total of this group, which coincided in size with the complete set of educators.

Observation was used as the data collection technique and the Maslach Burnout Inventory, MBI by Maslach and Jackson, in its second version, translated into Spanish by Gil and Peiró (1986) in its second version, translated to Spanish by Gil and Peiró (1997) based on the adaptation for the same region of the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey, MBI-ED ED (Maslach y Jackson, 1986; Maslach et al., 2001) and the Spanish version, validated by Seisdedos (1997) and applied to a teaching population.

While for studies carried out in the Latin American context reference is made to the one developed by Despradel (2016) for the Dominican Republic, who applied this instrument (MBI-ED) to a significant proportion of a group of teachers in Santo Domingo, the results indicate psychometric consistency for the measurement objectives of each study. Within these considerations, we return to the research conducted by La Rotta (2021) with the aim of validating the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-ED) questionnaire in the context of the Dominican Republic, in a version applied to teachers, which allowed the analysis of the psychometric properties of the scale. Regarding validity and reliability, the instrument presented Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) values for each of the three dimensions: emotional exhaustion ( $\alpha=0.86$ ); depersonalization ( $\alpha=0.60$ ) and personal fulfillment ( $\alpha=0.67$ ). In this case, the reduced and updated version of 17 items was implemented, which assesses stress by means of a Likert scale with 7 response options, ranging from a range of 0 (Never) to 6 (Every day).

The items that make up the scale are grouped to obtain the values per dimension, thus emotional exhaustion is obtained from the sum of questions 1,2,3,6,8,13,14,16 and 20. Rated between 0 and 18 points, it is qualified as a low level. From 19 to 36 corresponds to medium and from 37 on, it is defined as high. With respect to depersonalization, it is extracted from questions 5,10,11,15 and 22. It is rated as low with a value from 0 to 10; medium between 11 and 20 and high, from 21 onwards. While the realization is drawn from the answers comprising 4,7,9,12,17,18,19 and 21. It is low when it ranges from 0 to 33; medium when it ranges from 34 to 39 and from 40 to 48.

To determine the levels of mindfulness, the MAAS scale (*Mindful Attention Awareness Scale*) was applied to the same sample, which measures each participant's ability to be present and aware in the moment, focused on attention and awareness in the daily life and work environment. For this purpose, teachers answered 15 questions, according to the proposed Likert scale from 0 to 6 points, according to the frequency with which they experience certain attitudes or behaviors related to mindfulness. This scale measures dimensions such as the ability to remain focused on the present moment, self-control to not react impulsively to emotional stimuli, and the ability to pay attention to details in daily life, according to the score obtained. Thus, higher scores near 6 indicate a greater tendency toward dispositional

mindfulness and lower scores near 1 suggest a lower tendency toward dispositional mindfulness.

According to the data analysis, the exploration/description is performed by applying descriptive statistics, which allows summarizing, describing and representing distributions (categorical or metric). For this purpose, a matrix was constructed in Excel where the information collected was recorded and systematized, and the data were extrapolated to the statistical program SPSS (*Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*), for tabulation, coding and design of frequency and percentage tables; as well as, the set of statistical numerical values (median, mode, etc.), in order to perform the interpretation and analysis of the results.

Additionally, Pearson's correlation was used, which is applicable when continuous quantitative variables are handled and a linear relationship is assumed, and the Adjusted Significance (Bonferroni), which is useful in research such as the present one in which a variable (mindfulness) is linked to the dimensions associated with stress. Finally, to interpret the overall results, the values indicated by the subject were added algebraically, the scale separates each factor, from 0 (absence of stressors) to high (presence of stressors), according to the information described in previous paragraphs.

## Results

The findings of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and the MAAS scale (*Mindful Attention Awareness Scala*), applied to the sample of teachers in the Dominican Republic, are presented below. This information made it possible to understand the reality that emerges in relation to the variables defined in the research and the results obtained from the collection of information.

Thus, according to the sociodemographic data, a higher percentage (79%) of the sample was made up of female representatives; 46% of the sample was aged between 31 and 40 years old. In terms of marital status, the highest percentage corresponds to the married category (37%), followed by singles (44%). The predominant academic level in the sample was undergraduate, with 42%, and postgraduate with 37%. With respect to years of service, the highest percentage was located in the range of less than 10 years, represented by 61%. In relation to the level of education they attend, it was found that the highest percentage (63%) work in secondary school and 33% in elementary school.

**Table 1**  
*Results of the variables dimensions of work stress and gender*

Emotional Exhaustion (EO)										
Levels		Low		Medium		High				Total
Gender	F	% within the gender	% within AE	F	% within the gender	% within AE	F	% within the gender	% within AE	F %
Female	16	35,6%	84,2%	18	40%	72%	11	24,4%	84,6%	45 78.9%
Male	3	25%	15,8%	7	58,3%	28%	2	16,7%	15,4%	12 21.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>25%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>22,8%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>57 100%</b>
Depersonalization (D)										
Levels		Low		Medium		High				Total
Gender	F	% within the gender	% within D	F	% within the gender	% within D	F	% within the gender	% within D	F %
Female	38	84,4%	77,6%	7	15,6%	100%	0	0%	0%	45 78.9%
Male	11	91,7%	22,4%	0	0%	0%	1	8,3%	100%	12 21.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>176.1%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15.6%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>57 100</b>
Personal fulfillment (PR)										
Levels		Low		Medium		High				Total

Gender	F	% within the gender	% within the PR	F	% within the gender	% within the PR	F	% within the gender	% within the PR	F	%
Female	9	15.8%	75%	14	24.5%	29.2%	22	38.6%	48.8%	45	78.9%
Male	2	3.5%	25%	3	5.3%	70.8%	7	12.3%	51.1%	12	21.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>29.8%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>50.9%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>100</b>

Note. The table shows the relationship of stress levels, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization according to gender. The percentage of teachers who are affected in each of the dimensions is shown.

According to the values shown in Table 2 of the variable crossing between the dimensions that make up stress, in terms of the emotional exhaustion dimension, high levels (84.60%), medium level (72%) and low level (84.20%) were evidenced in the female group. These results indicate that women are the ones who expressed the most valued condition at all levels.

Regarding the depersonalization dimension, men showed a slight tendency to higher levels, although it is still a low percentage (8.3%) compared to women who did not show the condition at this level. In both women 77.60% and men 22.40%, it was higher at the low level, which shows that depersonalization was higher at the low level for both genders.

Meanwhile, the values obtained in personal fulfillment show that 15.8% of women are located in the low level of this condition, while in men it was determined that 3.5%. The highest percentage, in both genders, showed high levels in this dimension (38.6% female, male 12.3%). However, for the medium level, it is considered significant for the female group, located at 24.5%, which means that men perceive themselves as having higher levels of self-fulfillment than women, which contributes to increased stress levels.

According to these results, it is mainly evident that women present greater emotional exhaustion than men. Depersonalization is generally low, but men have a slight tendency to experience higher levels compared to women. Personal fulfillment tends from high to medium in both genders, indicating that satisfaction with their work or personal performance still needs to be improved in most of the participants.

**Table 2**

*Results dimensions of stress*

Dimension	Mean	Median	Mode	Variance
Emotional exhaustion	4.42	5	6	3.41
Depersonalization	2.45	5	0	2.49
Personal realization	4.98	4	6	2.09

According to the information in Table 3, there is evidence of a moderate-high degree of emotional exhaustion, minimal depersonalization and medium levels of personal fulfillment, which confirms the results presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Results of the mindfulness variable and gender*

Gender	Mindfulness Level						Total
	Low	Medium	High				
Female	2	33	10	17,54%	45	78,84%	
Male	0	10	2	3%	12	20,54%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>21,05%</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>100</b>	

The results of Table 4 on the mindfulness variable (mindfulness), in the high level is presented mostly in the representatives of the female gender (10), with less frequency in males

(2). The greatest number of female representatives was located at the middle level (34), compared to men (9); and at the lower level there were only two women and no men.

The average level of mindfulness is predominant in both genders (57.8% female, 17.5% male). Women have a slight tendency to experience low levels of mindfulness (3.5%) compared to men (0%). The high level is more frequent in women (17.54), although the difference is not very marked, 21.05% in men. The absence of low-level cases in men could indicate that they experience a more stable perception of mindfulness compared to women. Mindfulness seems to be present in the majority of participants, at medium levels, 57.8% women and 17.54% men. There is a slight inclination of women towards low levels, 3.5% compared to men, 0%, but there are also more cases of high mindfulness in this female group.

**Table 4**

*Pearson's correlation (r) between Maslach dimensions (MBI) and mindfulness rating*

MBI dimension	r (Pearson)	Sig.(bilateral)	Sig. Adjusted. (Bonferroni)
Emotional exhaustion	-.61**	.000	.000
Depersonalization	-.49**	.000	.000
Personal realization	.53**	.000	.000

*Note.* Conventional significance  $p < .05$

According to the information presented in Table 5, it is observed that there is a moderately high-low correlation between mindfulness and emotional exhaustion. That is, the greater the mindfulness, the less emotional exhaustion; likewise, a negative relationship was detected with depersonalization. On the other hand, self-realization is positively correlated with mindfulness.

## **Discussion and conclusions**

According to the results obtained, stress in teachers is characterized by high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and low levels of personal fulfillment. Consequently, as obtained from the initial diagnosis of this research to the sample evaluated, it is mainly evident that women show greater emotional exhaustion than men. Depersonalization is generally low, but men have a slight tendency to experience higher levels of this condition compared to women. As for personal fulfillment, it was at the medium level for both genders, indicating that even though the participants feel satisfaction with their work or personal performance, there is still much room for improvement in this dimension.

Regarding the variables gender and emotional exhaustion, a higher percentage of participants in the female group had high, medium and low levels of this condition compared to men. This difference suggests that women are the ones who mostly expressed the valued condition at all levels. Thus, they may be the most vulnerable to experiencing elevated levels of emotional exhaustion in the context of this research. The results are supported by those reported in the research of Salomón and Valdez, developed to analyze the presence of stress in different professionals, in which they found that women scored higher percentages for the emotional exhaustion dimension (2019) developed to analyze the presence of stress in different professionals, in which they found that women scored higher percentages for the emotional exhaustion dimension. Contrary to this, the study developed by Mieles et al. (2024) with the purpose of establishing a stress prevention program, showed the highest percentages for emotional exhaustion within the medium level in the group of men. This trend reinforces the need to explore the specific emotional burdens faced by teachers in the context analyzed.

On the levels of depersonalization, according to gender, men show a slight tendency to higher levels, although it is still a low percentage compared to the female group that did not

evidence the condition at this level. In both women (77.60%) and men (22.40%), it was higher in the low level, which shows that depersonalization obtained the highest percentage for the low level, indicating that this was the general trend for both genders. However, Tabares et al. (2020) although the study did not focus exclusively on gender, they highlighted that depersonalization could be generated as a response to frustration and work overload, which may significantly influence male groups more than female ones.

These findings are supported by those reported by Huamani et al. (2022) in their proposed research to determine predictors of stress in university teachers in Bolivia, in which they found that depersonalization is a predictor of this pathology, even though they found average levels for this dimension in groups of both sexes. Bennasar et al. (2022) in the study conducted on teacher burnout in the classroom, reported a significant correlation between depersonalization and emotional exhaustion. Albites (2019) in the research conducted on university teachers, showed a significant percentage (60%) of respondents with high levels of depersonalization.

While the levels of personal fulfillment showed high levels for both genders (38.6% female, male 12.3%), the results show that the majority of the teachers surveyed, regardless of gender, although they perceive themselves as fulfilled, demonstrate that they can still work on reaching and achieving greater professional and personal achievements within the teaching staff, as shown in the research. In this case, the high levels of personal accomplishment act as a stress mitigating factor, since by perceiving themselves as satisfied with their performance, it suggests that, even if there are possible emotional burdens derived from the teaching job, they have established a solid base of sense of achievement and success that defines this dimension.

This information also emphasizes that the sample under study has personal resources or protective factors in the work environment that promote efficiency and satisfaction, which, in turn, potentially counteract the development of stress. However, the percentages obtained for the low and medium levels show that work still needs to be done in this dimension to achieve full personal development in the entire sample in the context under study.

Similar results were obtained by Manzano (2020) in the research he carried out to determine the prevalence of personal fulfillment and its relationship with stress in a sample of teachers in Ecuador, who reported the highest percentages for this factor. Meanwhile, Salcedo et al. (2020) in their study of teachers in an educational unit in Lima, confirm a high level of personal fulfillment in these professionals. Similarly, Hidalgo et al. (2019) reported low and medium levels of personal accomplishment in the population that they addressed in the research they implemented to determine stress levels in university professors working in different careers.

With respect to the mindfulness variable, it is evident that the high level is more frequent in women, although the difference is not very marked in men. However, the greatest number of female representatives was located at the middle level, compared to men; and at the lower level there were only two women and no men. Meanwhile, the medium level of mindfulness was predominant for both genders (57.8% female, 17.5% male). In accordance with these data, research such as that carried out by Ferguson (2022) in a group of teachers, reported that the female group has a slight tendency to experience low levels of mindfulness when compared to men. This confirms that the absence of low-level cases in men could indicate that they experience a more stable perception of mindfulness compared to women.

In other words, mindfulness seems to be present in the majority of participants, at medium levels in a greater number of women and in a smaller proportion in men. This allowed us to observe a slight inclination of women towards low levels in comparison with men, but there are also more cases of high mindfulness in this female group. On these findings, Wagner et al. (2024) report that the apparent stability of mindfulness in men, evidenced by the absence of cases for the low level, could reflect that they practice different coping strategies or a lower

preference to report certain types of vulnerability compared to women. That is, members of the male group could be more reflective about their internal emotions and therefore show a wider distribution in the levels of mindfulness.

In addition to this, a moderately high-low correlation is confirmed between mindfulness and emotional exhaustion, i.e., the greater the mindfulness, the lower the emotional exhaustion. Likewise, a negative relationship with depersonalization was detected, which is in agreement with the information provided by the research conducted by Yufang and Xindong (2021) which highlights that when there is greater self-awareness and focus, depersonalization decreases and personal connection increases.

On the other hand, personal accomplishment showed a positive correlation with mindfulness, indicating that individuals with greater mindfulness tend to experience greater satisfaction and skill in their tasks. This behavior is consistent with that reported by Wagner et al (2024) who indicate that mindfulness functions as a protector against burnout and promotes occupational well-being, particularly in educational settings.

According to the information obtained from the study, it is concluded that the diagnosis made in the sample studied reveals a complex picture of work-related stress, highlighting key differences according to gender. Because, women show greater emotional exhaustion at all levels, which positions them as more vulnerable to this condition. On the other hand, although depersonalization is low for both genders, men tend to have slightly higher levels. As for personal accomplishment, it is notably high in most teachers, regardless of gender, which acts as a significant protective factor against stress, suggesting a moderate sense of achievement and job satisfaction.

As for the predominance of the medium level of mindfulness in both genders, it is a key indicator, suggesting that, although mindfulness is present in the majority of faculty, there is considerable room to strengthen it and take it to higher levels. Since, there is evidence of a greater number of cases of high mindfulness in the female group, although the difference with men is not markedly different. This reinforces the idea that, in some respects, women may be more predisposed or receptive to developing and practicing these types of mindfulness techniques.

These results accentuate the need to address teacher well-being with a differentiated gender perspective. Therefore, future interventions aimed at mitigating stress, burnout and depersonalization, and contributing to the promotion of personal fulfillment, should consider these particularities. For female faculty, it may be beneficial to focus on strategies to maintain and stabilize high levels of mindfulness. While, for the male group, the promotion of mindfulness may require approaches that revert to a more stable perception of this skill, with the purpose of exploring how mindfulness contributes to the strengthening of personal fulfillment and the reduction of elements that generate stress, burnout and depersonalization. Thus, providing training to strengthen mindfulness in the teachers who participated in the diagnosis conducted, is a promising route to enhance emotional health and well-being in this population, seeking to positively impact teaching performance, school performance and educational quality.

It should be noted that this study has certain limitations, such as bias and social desirability, since it depends on the collection of information from the proposed scales, and it is considered that teachers' responses may depend on their subjective perception at the time of their application. Also, since the participants are limited to a specific sample of teachers, the generalization of the information to the entire region is restricted. Therefore, it is suggested that the study be continued with a more robust sample that would allow the generalization of the results to other educational contexts in the Dominican Republic.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the directors, management team and teachers of the Educational Centers of Ciudad Santa María (CISAMA) Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic, for the openness and space provided for the development of the research, to whom the results of the study will be presented later.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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## Psychometric properties of the CHASIDE vocational test in final year high school students

### Propiedades psicométricas del test vocacional CHASIDE en estudiantes de último año de bachillerato en población hondureña

Rafael Menjivar Alas

National Autonomous University of Honduras (Honduras)

([rmenjivar05@gmail.com](mailto:rmenjivar05@gmail.com)) (<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-4949-1197>)

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#### Manuscript information:

Recibido/Received: 15/06/25

Revisado/Reviewed: 02/13/26

Aceptado/Accepted: 18/03/26

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#### ABSTRACT

##### Keywords:

Career guidance, CHASIDE test, psychometric properties, skills, aptitudes.

Previous studies conceived of vocational guidance as a comprehensive approach that helps individuals discover their path in the academic and professional spheres, in order to satisfy their personal needs and goals. This study used the CHASIDE test as a relevant tool to identify styles and preferences associated with vocational choice processes and to analyze its psychometric properties in graduating high school students from public schools in the city of San Pedro Sula, Honduras. 715 students participated, with ages ranging from 15 to 20 years ( $M=17.38$ ;  $SD=1.03$ ). Psychometric properties were analyzed through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, and reliability by internal consistency through Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega, whose results provided conclusive evidence supporting the internal structure of the test and a one-dimensional model of the factors. It is concluded that the CHASIDE scale presented adequate psychometric properties for the sample, which indicates that its use is useful in the Honduran population.

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#### RESUMEN

##### Palabras clave:

Orientación vocacional, test CHASIDE, propiedades psicométricas, habilidades, aptitudes.

Estudios previos conciben la orientación vocacional como un enfoque integral que ayuda a las personas a descubrir su camino en el ámbito académico y laboral, con el fin de satisfacer sus necesidades y objetivos personales. En este estudio se utilizó el test CHASIDE como una herramienta relevante para identificar estilos y preferencias asociados a los procesos de elección vocacional, y analizar las propiedades psicométricas del mismo en estudiantes de último año de bachillerato de los centros educativos públicos de la ciudad de San Pedro Sula, en Honduras. Participaron 715 estudiantes, con edades que fluctuaron entre los 15 y 20 años ( $M=17.38$ ;  $SD=1.03$ ). Se analizaron las propiedades psicométricas mediante el análisis factorial exploratorio y confirmatorio respectivamente, y la confiabilidad por consistencia interna mediante el alpha de Cronbach y el omega de McDonald, cuyos resultados aportaron pruebas concluyentes que respaldan la estructura interna del test y un

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modelo unidimensional de los factores. Se concluye que la escala CHASIDE presenta propiedades psicométricas adecuadas para la muestra, lo cual indica que su uso es útil en población hondureña.

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## **Introduction**

Career guidance is essential for high school seniors because it helps them discover and explore their personal "types" or styles, which in turn helps them choose a college major. Holland (1975) suggests that each person has a unique set of traits, skills, and values that lead them to feel motivated and satisfied in certain professional fields, and career guidance helps students identify their personal and professional traits, enabling them to explore different options that suit their personal style and increase their likelihood of future success and satisfaction.

The purpose of this article is to study vocational orientation through the use of the CHASIDE test, which focuses on the most important decisions people face upon completing high school and deciding to pursue higher education (Holland, 1959; Rodríguez and Ochoa, 2012). Career guidance is not a process limited solely to adolescence—the stage at which secondary education ends—but can also take place in adulthood, due to various circumstances (Lopera et al., 2018).

According to Ramos and Gonzales (2021), career guidance is a process designed for students with the aim of fostering behaviors that will help them choose a specific field in which they wish to pursue their studies. Its purpose is to identify students' interests, aptitudes, abilities, and preferences, which in turn are linked to the professional goals they wish to achieve (Mantilla and Brito, 2022). From a psycho-pedagogical perspective, it is a tool that helps students choose a field of study based on their motivations and abilities (Lugo et al., 2022).

The primary role of career guidance is to encourage students to explore their skills and aptitudes, with the aim of helping them make decisions about their immediate academic future. In this regard, when making a decision about what to study, an individual's choice will be influenced by whether or not they received guidance at the right time; in other words, career guidance has a significant impact on an individual's academic and career decisions (Callejas et al., 2020).

The fundamental purpose of career guidance is to explain the challenges that young people face, and through this guidance, we seek to provide them with the tools they need to navigate these challenges. The guidance process involves specific activities related to personal exploration of one's educational preferences, which in turn are linked to specific aspects of the labor market. These processes are carried out by psychologists who, drawing on their experience, identify the unique characteristics of each individual and support them in their decision-making (Chávez et al., 2018).

Professionals rely on these tests as valuable tools to help young people determine the best options for their future. These tests consist of indicators based on various professions or academic fields that can be used to determine the subjects' preferences. The use of these tools supports the career guidance process by helping students recognize, analyze, and demonstrate their abilities through the right choice of vocational training, thereby facilitating the achievement of their goals (Sánchez, 2019).

Counseling also helps students develop their intellectual abilities, enhancing their chances of academic or professional success, and adding a new dimension to their personal identity. Choosing a field of study to continue one's education can be a challenge for anyone, since individual interests tend to change over time; this is why career guidance for young people regarding new career fields is so important, as it is a decision that will shape the rest of their lives (Ormaza, 2019).

To date, the benefits of proper career guidance have been well documented, but in some cases, the process is carried out incorrectly due to a lack of skills and interest in the process. It can also lead to problems when it is not based on a clear understanding of individual aptitudes and interests, but is instead influenced by external factors such as social, family, or economic

pressure. Furthermore, inadequate career guidance or the use of inappropriate processes can lead to poor choices (Ormaza, 2019).

This study used the CHASIDE test to identify decisions regarding interests and preferences based on the aptitudes and skills of high school seniors. The test had previously been adapted into Spanish for use with an Ecuadorian population; that study, conducted with high school students, demonstrated that the total scores for a single factor reflected the nature of vocational orientation, and the internal consistency reliability analysis revealed adequate scores (Morales and Gálvez, 2018).

## Method

### *Participants*

The sample consisted of 715 young participants, all of whom were required to be enrolled in public schools in the morning, afternoon, or extended-day programs. 65.03% identified as women and 34.97% as men; the age range was between 15 and 20 years ( $M = 17.38$ ;  $SD = 1.03$ ).

76.78% of the students in the sample were enrolled at the José Trinidad Reyes High School, and only 23.22% were enrolled at the Primero de Mayo School. The computer science and science programs accounted for 28.53% and 26.71% of the total, respectively, making them the programs with the highest number of students. On the other hand, the programs with the fewest students were the technical high school program in electrical engineering, at 1.81%, and community health and nutrition, at 3.07% of the total sample. This study used stratified probability sampling.

### *Instrument*

The CHASIDE Vocational Orientation Test, developed by the American psychologist John Holland (Holland, 1959), was used to collect the data. This test allows individuals to discover their calling by identifying their interests and aptitudes, thereby helping them make the best decision (Martínez et al., 2024). The CHASIDE Test has been used in various international research studies (Martínez et al., 2024).

The CHASIDE test consists of 98 items grouped into two dimensions (interests and aptitudes) and seven subdimensions: administrative and accounting; humanities and social sciences; arts; medicine and health sciences; engineering and computer science; defense and security; and exact and organic sciences. The interests dimension consists of a total of 70 items (10 for each subdimension), and the aptitudes dimension consists of 28 items (4 for each subdimension). This test is administered in a self-report format, in which the participant answers the items themselves in approximately 30–50 minutes (Morales and Gálvez, 2018).

The CHASIDE test identifies six personality types, represented as a hexagon: Realistic (R), Investigative (I), Artistic (A), Social (S), Enterprising (E), and Conventional (C), which is designed to classify individuals (Gupta et al., 2008, as cited in Morales and Gálvez, 2018). Each includes a description of one's own vocational interests and their relationship to personality traits (Holland, 1997). This instrument is related to five factors: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Goldberg, 1993, as cited in Morales and Gálvez, 2018).

For this study, the CHASIDE vocational guidance questionnaire was selected because of the importance it places on students' aptitudes and interests, which allows for the assessment of their competencies and an accurate evaluation of their vocational orientation, with a focus on aptitude and behavioral aspects. In addition, it is a tool that helps determine the most appropriate decision based on the individual's interests and preferences, as well as their aptitudes and skills (Holland, 1997).

### **Procedure**

To conduct the study, written authorization was requested from the municipal directors of education and the administrators of each school. Prior to administering the survey, and to ensure the anonymity, confidentiality, consent, and voluntary participation of the respondents, an informational document was prepared for students and parents, detailing all aspects of the study, and informed consent was obtained from all students included in the sample.

To collect the data, the CHASIDE test was administered to high school seniors at two schools in the municipality of San Pedro Sula, Honduras, in April 2024, using a self-report format. Both the informed consent process and the test were conducted in person, and the duration ranged from 30 to 50 minutes. The study was conducted by the study coordinator, in collaboration with the teaching staff at the schools.

### **Data Analysis**

The RStudio software was used to perform all statistical calculations, and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was also used to compare the results. To analyze the data, a frequency analysis was conducted and the main descriptive statistics were applied.

The CHASIDE test, consisting of seven components, was subjected to exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). To assess the AFE, Bartlett's sphericity test and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sample adequacy were used. A tetrachoric correlation was performed because the instrument is dichotomous in nature, meaning the response scale has two points ranging from 0 to 1. a parallel analysis was then conducted to determine the number of factors to retain using the extraction method; the minimum residuals (MINRES) were obtained; and, finally, oblique rotation was applied to obtain the factor rotation (Yusoff, 2019).

Next, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to obtain the model specification, factor structure, parameter estimates, and model fit indices (NFI, TLI, CFI, RMSR, RMSEA.ci.lower, RMSEA.ci.upper); finally, each model was interpreted. The fit indices were calculated using the Weighted Least Squares Mean and Variance (WLSMV) estimator (Yusoff, 2019).

Reliability was assessed using internal consistency, as measured by Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega, for each factor (interests and aptitudes), the total score on the CHASIDE scale, and the second-order factors tested in the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Similarly, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine whether each of the model's seven second-order factors was correlated with the total score (Yusoff, 2019; Sattler, 2010).

## **Results**

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the seven components and the total score of the CHASIDE instrument. The mean scores for the factors ranged from 7.75 to 10.00; the factor with the highest score was humanities and social sciences ( $10.00 \pm 2.31$ ), and the lowest was administrative and accounting ( $7.75 \pm 2.58$ ). The range was 13 and 14, respectively, and the skewness was negative for both the factors and the total score, indicating that the distribution has more values to the left of the mean than to the right. The total CHASIDE score had a mean of ( $59.18 \pm 12.48$ ) and a range of 81.

### **Structural Validity**

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted using the principal component extraction method to examine the underlying construct of the CHASIDE test. The inter-item correlations were not entirely satisfactory, ranging from 0.162 to 0.738. Bartlett's sphericity

test yielded a chi-square value of 1271.86 ( $df = 4753$ ), with a p-value of 1 ( $> 0.05$ ), and the KMO test yielded a value of 0.79. The parallel analysis suggested retaining seven factors.

After applying the extraction and rotation methods, it was found that not all items loaded onto the factor for which they were theoretically designed. Once the items with their respective factor loadings were identified, the following distribution was obtained (see Table 1).

**Table 1**  
*Distribution of Items by Factors in the CHASIDE Test*

Factor 1		Factor 2		Factor 3		Factor 4		Factor 5		Factor 6		Factor 7	
item	C.F.	item	C.F.	item	C.F.	item	C.F.	item	C.F.	item	C.F.	item	C.F.
98	<b>.441</b>	9	<b>.300</b>	21	<b>.309</b>	33	<b>.738</b>	75	<b>.434</b>	84	<b>.557</b>	77	<b>.555</b>
12	<b>.366</b>	34	<b>.588</b>	45	<b>.493</b>	92	<b>.710</b>	6	<b>.338</b>	31	.229	42	<b>.373</b>
64	<b>.332</b>	80	<b>.457</b>	96	<b>.383</b>	70	<b>.604</b>	19	<b>.333</b>	48	.261	88	<b>.330</b>
53	<b>.577</b>	25	<b>.406</b>	57	.260	8	<b>.334</b>	38	<b>.317</b>	73	<b>.420</b>	17	.273
85	.252	95	<b>.531</b>	28	.292	87	<b>.643</b>	60	<b>.409</b>	5	<b>.476</b>	93	<b>.612</b>
1	<b>.329</b>	67	<b>.322</b>	11	.237	62	.270	27	<b>.303</b>	65	<b>.425</b>	32	<b>.553</b>
78	<b>.672</b>	41	<b>.348</b>	50	<b>.572</b>	23	<b>.569</b>	83	<b>.509</b>	14	<b>.443</b>	68	<b>.471</b>
20	<b>.558</b>	74	<b>.300</b>	3	<b>.421</b>	44	<b>.564</b>	54	<b>.350</b>	37	<b>.414</b>	49	<b>.367</b>
71	<b>.679</b>	56	<b>.326</b>	81	<b>.582</b>	16	<b>.455</b>	47	<b>.332</b>	58	<b>.351</b>	35	<b>.439</b>
91	<b>.523</b>	89	<b>.303</b>	36	<b>.368</b>	52	<b>.322</b>	97	<b>.605</b>	24	.272	77	<b>.555</b>
15	<b>.372</b>	63	<b>.448</b>	22	<b>.302</b>	69	<b>.532</b>	26	<b>.528</b>	13	.176	94	<b>.338</b>
51	<b>.631</b>	30	<b>.418</b>	39	.167	40	.267	59	<b>.572</b>	66	<b>.443</b>	7	<b>.344</b>
2	.287	72	<b>.350</b>	76	<b>.355</b>	29	<b>.364</b>	90	.245	18	<b>.558</b>	79	.162
46	<b>.425</b>	86	<b>.348</b>	82	<b>.310</b>	4	<b>.484</b>	10	<b>.575</b>	43	<b>.432</b>	55	<b>.614</b>

Note. Item factor loadings in bold indicate acceptable values of  $\geq .30$ . Created by the author.

Second-order factors: factor 1 “administrative and accounting,” factor 2 “humanities and social sciences,” factor 3 “arts,” factor 4 “medicine and health sciences,” factor 5 “engineering and computer science,” factor 6 “defense and security,” and factor 7 “exact and organic sciences.” Each of the seven factors consists of 14 items. Table 1 summarizes the final distribution of the items along with their factor loadings.

In the confirmatory factor analysis, the results showed that the three models tested met the acceptance criteria with regard to descriptive and inferential fit indices. However, the hierarchical and correlated models yielded very similar results, as shown in Table 2. The one-dimensional model yielded the best fit, with SRMR and RMSEA indices below the values proposed by Abad et al. (2011):  $0.04 < 0.08$  and  $0.05 < 0.06$ , respectively, suggesting that the model fits the data well. The CFI and TLI both yielded values  $> 0.90$  (Kline, 2016; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014).

These findings suggest that the CHASIDE test includes a general factor that explains both the seven factors of the construct and the 14 items that make up each of them. The fact that all models have similar fit indices suggests that the inclusion of a general factor does not alter the factor structure initially proposed by the AFE; it merely adds evidence of construct validity that was not considered by the AFE. Therefore, it is concluded that the CHASIDE test has a unidimensional factor model, as illustrated in Figure 1.

**Table 2**  
*Goodness-of-fit indices for the factorial models examined*

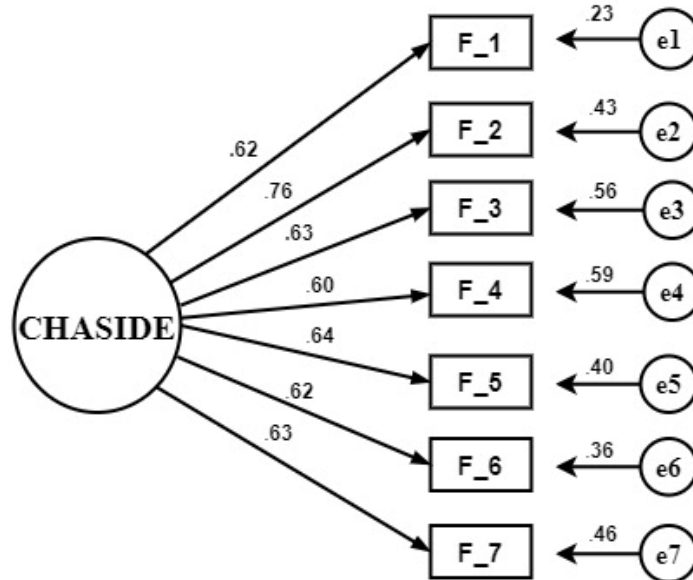
Model	$X^2$	gl	p	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA (IC)
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One-dimensional	60,820	14 ,000	.990	.984	.041	.054 (.043 – .079)
Hierarchical model	58,962	12 ,000	.987	.977	.047	.074 (.056 – .093)
Correlated model	58,962	13 ,000	.987	.979	.047	.070 (.053 – .089)

Note.  $\chi^2$  = chi-square; df = degrees of freedom; p = significance; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; CI = Confidence Interval; SRMR = Standardized Residual Covariance Measure.

**Figure 1**

One-dimensional model of the CHASIDE vocational orientation test



Note. Created using RStudio.

**Reliability**

The results suggest satisfactory internal consistency for both the overall score and the subdimensions (Flora, 2020; Ventura-León and Caycho-Rodríguez, 2017). To this end, internal consistency reliability was calculated using a tetrachoric matrix; the total Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was  $\alpha = 0.92$ , and the total McDonald’s omega was  $\Omega = 0.93$ . The CHASIDE instrument demonstrated a high level of reliability, similar to that found in the study conducted in Ecuador ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ) (Morales and Gálvez, 2018).

Table 3 shows McDonald’s omega and Cronbach’s alpha for each factor of the unidimensional model that was previously tested in the AFC. The factor for organic and exact sciences yielded the highest values ( $\Omega = 0.82$  and  $\alpha = 0.77$ ). On the other hand, the humanistic and artistic factors showed the lowest values ( $\Omega = 0.74$  and  $\alpha = 0.70$ ). Both the overall scale and the subscales demonstrated adequate levels of reliability for the sample.

**Table 3**

Reliability based on the internal consistency of the CHASIDE scale

Factors of the CHASIDE Scale	McDonald’s Omega	Cronbach’s alpha
Accounting Clerk	0.76	0.71
Humanities and Social Sciences	0.74	0.70
Artistic	0.74	0.70
Medicine and Health Sciences	0.83	0.75
Engineering and Computer Science	0.74	0.71
Defense and Security	0.75	0.72
Exact and Organic Sciences	0.82	0.77
Total score	0.93	0.92

Note. McDonald’s omega and Cronbach’s alpha by factor, and the total for the single-factor model.

## Discussion and Conclusions

The psychometric properties of the CHASIDE scale were analyzed in order to address the objective of this study. Factor analyses confirmed the existence of the seven factors that had been theoretically supported by a systematic review of the literature (Holland, 1959; 1975; 1997; Morales and Gálvez, 2018). In addition, these findings showed that the seven factors on the scale are highly positively correlated. In other words, each subdimension is related to and interacts with the others.

The humanities and social sciences factor yielded the highest factor loadings among all items on the scale, suggesting an excellent and appropriate fit to the measured factor. Consequently, it is the factor that provides the most psychometric information for measuring vocational orientation in the context of secondary education in Honduras. The findings also suggest seven factors correlated with an overarching factor that explains them, as well as the observable variables themselves. This general factor is called the “CHASIDE Vocational Orientation Test” and is the latent variable of greatest interest in the study.

Another finding of this study is that the CHASIDE test exhibits excellent psychometric properties in terms of construct validity, which statistically guarantees that the scale effectively measures vocational orientation among high school seniors (Ferrando et al., 2022; Izquierdo et al., 2014).

Similarly, the scale also exhibits excellent reliability properties, yielding satisfactory McDonald’s omega and Cronbach’s alpha coefficients, making it reliable for the task at hand (Flora, 2020; Ventura-León and Caycho-Rodríguez, 2017).

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the CHASIDE scale provides consistent information on the construct of “vocational orientation” among high school seniors in the Honduran context, making it a reliable and valid tool for making well-founded technical and professional judgments. However, although the scale demonstrated good psychometric properties, it has some limitations and methodological shortcomings.

First, although the sample was large and gender-balanced, the survey was administered at only two schools in the city of San Pedro Sula, Honduras, which does not provide the necessary representativeness with regard to all schools in the city. Consequently, one of the research directions proposed in this study is to apply the instrument in all schools in the city—both public and private—in order to verify whether the scale’s factor model fits and whether it demonstrates adequate reliability.

Another limitation relates to the cross-sectional nature of the study, which prevented us from observing changes in the construct over time. On the other hand, given the way the study was conducted, the possibility of subjective bias in the research results is acknowledged. In other words, it is possible that the participants may not have exercised genuine critical judgment regarding the construct being measured. The CHASIDE test is an exercise designed to assess vocational orientation, which should not necessarily be regarded as the definitive measure.

It is important to note that the limitations discussed do not invalidate the results of this study, much less the evaluation model developed based on them; rather, they simply present a critical perspective that researchers or evaluators should take into account when using this scale and drawing conclusions based on it. Further work is needed to examine this phenomenon in greater depth within the Honduran context, and such research will contribute to the development of a genuine, psychometrically sound, and robust model for measuring the construct of “vocational orientation” in Honduran secondary education.

This study was a pioneering effort in Honduras, analyzing the psychometric properties of a vocational orientation scale, which represents a valuable contribution to the country's National Education System. In particular, the study is valid, and the results obtained are reliable and objective; therefore, it can be concluded that this research provides important information for Honduran psychometrics regarding vocational guidance for high school seniors.

The scale serves as a model for assessing vocational orientation in the country's secondary education system, providing sufficient information to make valid and reliable technical and professional judgments. As such, this tool can help generate valuable insights into the measurable construct, making it an innovative option for achieving greater coverage in the country's secondary education system.

Based on the results obtained from the CHASIDE test, it was found that most of the students evaluated performed well overall. An analysis of each subdimension revealed that participants scored higher in the humanities and social sciences, suggesting that they may be interested in careers related to these fields as they pursue higher education.

After analyzing the structural validity of the CHASIDE test using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), it was found that the unidimensional model with seven second-order factors calculated in EFA matches the one obtained in CFA, which showed adequate fit indices. Consequently, we suggest using a one-factor model to assess vocational orientation through the CHASIDE test among high school students in the Honduran population.

### **Implications**

From an educational perspective, this study has direct implications for educational planning and intervention. A psychometrically sound instrument can help teachers and guidance counselors identify learning profiles, enabling them to design differentiated teaching strategies, personalized support programs, and academic or vocational guidance initiatives. However, the use of these findings requires specific training for educational staff to avoid simplistic or deterministic interpretations that might oversimplify the complexity of adolescent learning.

### **Acknowledgments**

Special thanks are extended to the education authorities of the municipality of San Pedro Sula, as well as to the teachers and administrative staff at the secondary schools who participated in administering the questionnaire and in obtaining the necessary permits for its administration.

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