PROTAGONISM AND ADHERENCE TO MORAL VALUES AT SCHOOL

PROTAGONISMO E ADESÃO A VALORES MORAIS NA ESCOLA

PROTAGONISMO Y ADHERENCIA A LOS VALORES MORALES EN LA ESCUELA

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ABSTRACT: This research aimed to compare the adherence to the moral values respect, justice and solidarity among three groups of young people engaged or not in Help Teams (HTs) in their schools; verify whether adherence to respect in hypothetical situations of bullying is more related to adherence to justice or solidarity; and analyze differences in responses in relation to gender. In the research with a quantitative and qualitative approach, 2,513 adolescents from private schools in São Paulo participated in the sample. The instrument used was a questionnaire with closed questions. The data indicate that girls show greater adherence to all values. Adherence to respect is more related to solidarity than to justice; the groups formed by adolescents from HTs have a more evolved mode of adherence and in schools with HTs, adherence to moral values is greater among adolescents compared to groups that do not have this form of protagonism in their school. It is necessary to understand adherence to moral values and present an effective strategy to encourage them in young people who act as protagonists in coexistence.

KEYWORDS: Moral values. Bullying. Peer support systems.

RESUMO: Esta pesquisa teve como objetivos comparar o modo de adesão aos valores morais respeito, justiça e solidariedade entre três grupos de jovens engajados ou não em Equipes de Ajuda (HTs) em suas escolas; verificar se a adesão ao respeito em situações hipotéticas de bullying está mais relacionada à adesão a justiça ou a solidariedade; e analisar diferenças nas respostas em relação ao gênero. Na pesquisa de abordagem quanti-qualitativa, participaram da amostra 2.513 adolescentes de escolas particulares paulistas. O instrumento utilizado foi um questionário com perguntas fechadas. Os dados apontam que meninas apresentam maior de adesão a todos os valores. A adesão ao respeito está mais relacionada à solidariedade que à justiça; os grupos formados pelos adolescentes das HTs apresentam modo de adesão mais evolvido e em escolas com HTs a adesão aos valores morais é maior entre adolescentes em relação aos grupos que não possuem em sua escola esta forma de protagonismo. É necessário compreender a adesão aos valores morais e apresentar uma estratégia eficaz de fomentá-los nos jovens que atuam de maneira protagonista na convivência.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Valores morais. Bullying. Sistemas de apoio entre iguais.

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RESUMEN: Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo comparar la adhesión a los valores morales respeto, justicia y solidaridad entre tres grupos de jóvenes que participan o no en Equipos de Ayuda (HT) en sus escuelas; verificar si la adherencia al respeto en hipotéticas situaciones de bullying está más relacionada con la adherencia a la justicia o la solidaridad; y analizar las diferencias en las respuestas en relación con el género. En la investigación con enfoque cuantitativo y cualitativo, participaron de la muestra 2.513 adolescentes de escuelas privadas de São Paulo. El instrumento utilizado fue un cuestionario con preguntas cerradas. Los datos indican que las niñas muestran mayor adherencia a todos los valores. La adhesión al respeto está más relacionada con la solidaridad que con la justicia; los grupos formados por adolescentes de HT tienen un modo de adherencia más evolucionado y en las escuelas con HT la adherencia a los valores morales es mayor entre los adolescentes en comparación con los grupos que no tienen esta forma de protagonismo en su escuela. Es necesario comprender la adhesión a los valores morales y presentar una estrategia eficaz para incentivarlos en los jóvenes que actúan como protagonistas en la convivencia.


Introduction

The present research that we are now introducing deals with the correspondence between bullying and the absence of values such as justice, solidarity, respect, as well as the urgency that these same values are experienced in educational institutions. Certainly, times are challenging. In different social spheres we have seen and lived different situations in which moral or ethical values are increasingly absent to the same extent that they are constantly evoked. About this, Goergen (2007, p. 738, our translation) states that “the more people talk about ethics and morals, the more scandalously immoral practices become”.

The fact is that in the absence of these values which we qualify as moral or ethical, quite undesirable forms of human coexistence take place. At school, this finding is no different. There are several problems present in interpersonal relationships that occur in educational institutions. One of these problems, for some time now, has drawn the attention of researchers, educators and even professionals who are not in the field of education, not so much because of its frequency, but because of the cruelty that this form of violence and its consequences represent without being aware of it. a very clear understanding of it by educators and managers so that interventional and preventive actions are effective: Bullying. Bullying is a type of violence whose group characteristic (SALMIVALLI, 2010; SALMIVALLI; PEETS, 2010) occurs repeatedly, between peers, among whom there is an imbalance of power. There is always one (or more) author whose intention is to hurt the other in the presence of an audience (AVILÉS MARTÍNEZ, 2006a; 2006b; DEL BARRIO et al., 2003; FANTE, 2005; OLWEUS, 1993;
TOGNETTA, 2010; TOGNETTA; AVILÉS MARTÍNEZ; ROSÁRIO, 2016; TOGNETTA; VINHA, 2010) and whose attitudes are disrespectful, intolerant, unfair and not at all supportive of the pain they cause. Thus, one of the analyzes about this phenomenon is directed to understanding it from the perspective of morality.

Thus, this research aims to collaborate with an issue pointed out by Gini, Pozzoli and Hauser (2010, p. 603), the need to pay more attention to studies that relate bullying and morality, as they found that the authors of the mistreatment would lack what they called “moral compassion”. Taking human development into account as explained by Piagetian Genetic Epistemology, the theory on which our studies are based, it is possible to state that values such as respect, tolerance, justice, solidarity, among others, are neither innate nor learned by mere transmission, but depend on of an internal construction always in the subject's interactions with the environment that intentionally conceives the experience of these values (PIAGET, 1932 [1994]).

Therefore, in this article we propose the presentation of current research on adherence to moral values - respect, justice and solidarity in school environments. We begin by indicating the concepts that we understand on the theme of moral values and present, right below, a type of strategy that can minimize counter-values (such as actions of intimidation and discrimination) and promote ethical coexistence: the Help Teams (HTs). Next, we detail the methodological path of the investigation, as well as the data found and the analyzes and discussions made about them.

Certainly, all the discussions held on this subject will be able to contribute to the urgent and necessary personal, curricular and institutional investment of educational institutions to understand the nature of a phenomenon as cruel and peculiar as bullying and the most effective possibilities of intervention and prevention that focus on what has been lacking, in most cases, to those involved in these situations: moral values.

Moral values

By the term value we understand “the reasons that justify or motivate our actions, making them preferable to others” (MARQUES; TAVARES; MENIN, 2017, p. 17, our translation). This research focuses on three universally desirable moral values - respect, justice and solidarity - not randomly chosen, but selected by the fact that their absence reverberates a necessary action of educational institutions: ethical formation.
Respect is not the product of rules, but of relationships (PIAGET, 1994 [1932]). In relation to authority, the child naturally has a form of respect that comes from adult coercion relationships, which, in fact, are necessary for child development, since they lead the child, initially, to accept the instructions imposed by the country. However, it is the overcoming of this form of respect that we desire – a respect that is exercised with reciprocity, a necessary condition for autonomy built through experiences of cooperation, which progressively form relations of equality. This form of relationship establishes such reciprocity between subjects, instead of coercion, towards mutual agreement, to the detriment of the imposition of rules that become rational and interior and will constitute moral truths of the subject (PIAGET, 1994 [1932]).

Justice, understood by Rawls (2002) as fairness, is likewise understood in Piagetian theory, but under an evolutionary analysis. Piaget (1994 [1932]) presents, based on his research, two more important types of justice: the first of them, retributive justice and distributive justice, related to reciprocity that suggests that laws are interpreted equally for all. However, simple egalitarianism evolves into “equity”, starting to consider the particular circumstance of each person involved (objectives, intentions, individual needs) to avoid injustices (PIAGET, 1994 [1932]).

As for solidarity, it is not possible to guarantee its obligatory aspect. No one can be condemned for not being supportive. However, such value rests on human desire, and becomes desirable. In this aspect, Lipovetsky (1994) suggests that, in fact, all values must exist not by obligation or duty, but by the person's spontaneous will, after all, the "wanting to do things, not the duty to do them, is the stronger reason to commit to something” (CORTINA, 2005, p. 193, our translation). Although solidarity and generosity are used as synonyms - and they can be, we chose the term solidarity in our research, as we understand that the instrument we used guided us to do so.

It is a fact that solidarity triggers, motivates or reinforces generosity. It is through the exercise of solidarity attitudes that one arrives at generosity, a more polished form of solidarity action (COMTE-SPONVILLE, 1995). The danger is that by dealing only with solidarity, one risks a certain assistentialism. It must be considered, however, that a solidary attitude can actually be related to generosity, if it goes beyond interest. Generosity, as a value (or virtue) can be considered desirable, however, like solidarity, it is not a mandatory value in relationships. Whoever receives a generous or supportive attitude does not have the right to receive it, it only had it since the other wanted to do so. Comte-Sponville (1995, p. 105, our
translation), considers it as the virtue of gifts, since “they are naturally led to do great things and, however, do not undertake anything that they do not feel capable of”.

Wouldn't respect, justice and solidarity be some of the values that could make the relationships lived in schools, spaces of acceptance and inclusion? Menin (1996, p. 61, our translation) states that “learning morality depends on discovering it in relationships with others [...]”, so how can we propose this in the school environment and in the relationships that are established there?

**Moral values and the school**

Several researchers have already proven that the school climate can favor (or not) the incidence of bullying situations in the school environment (BRADSHAW et al., 2009; LOUKAS; MURPHY, 2007; HAREL-FISCH et al., 2011; THAPA et al., 2012). At the same time, other research (DE VRIES; ZAN, 1997; VINHA, 2000, 2003; TOGNETTA, 2003) have also proven that environments whose relationships are based on mutual respect and cooperation favor moral development, as well as fairer, cooperative and solidary relationships. It is therefore necessary to think of strategies for the reduction or eradication of cases of violence such as bullying, for example, and let us focus on those whose main stakeholders, male and female students, are involved (COWIE; WALLACE, 2000; DEL BARRIO et al., 2005; SALMIVALLI; PEETS, 2010; TOGNETTA, 2010a; 2011; TOGNETTA; VINHA, 2010; AVILÉS MARTÍNEZ, 2013).

One path is what researchers in different countries around the world have been striving to establish in school environments as strategies for youth protagonism, or the so-called Peer Support, which in Brazil has been called *Sistemas de Apoio entre Iguaís* – SAI (Peer Support Systems) (AVILÉS MARTÍNEZ, 2018), to improve interaction between students (NAYLOR; COWIE, 1999; COWIE, 2000; COWIE et al., 2002; COWIE; HUTSON, 2005; COWIE; FERNANDEZ, 2006; AVILÉS MARTÍNEZ; TORRES VICENTE; VIAN BARÓN, 2008; AVILÉS MARTÍNEZ; ALONSO ELVIRA, 2011; AVILÉS MARTÍNEZ, 2012, 2013). We will deal with one of the types of SAI, the Help Teams (AVILÉS MARTÍNEZ; TORRES VICENTE; VIAN BARÓN, 2008), chosen by us to be implemented in schools in Brazil since 2015, aiming at improving and reducing situations of abuse. In general, the students who are part of this group and who are elected by their classmates, work at the school by observing relationships, providing help to colleagues, acting in simple conflictual cases, including excluded students, welcoming new students and favoring the coexistence among all. In fact,
“the project intends nothing less than to elevate students to the role of protagonists as a way out of coexistence problems that may occur in the daily life of the educational community” (AVILÉS MARTÍNEZ, 2013, p. 190, our translation).

Finally, Menin (1996, p. 60, our translation) warns us by stating that “whether they like it or not, all schools work in the moral formation of their students; however, not all do so in the direction of autonomy”. In this way, the school must have a plan to act in a systematic, intentional and planned way so that the environment is favorable to autonomy and ethical coexistence (FODRA; SOUZA, 2022; KNOENER; SANTOS; DUARTE, 2022; TOGNETTA, 2022), where moral values (such as justice, generosity, tolerance, compassion) are experienced by students through relationships of mutual respect and cooperation (PIAGET, 1994 [1932]).

The investigation

As we understand “research” as “a set of activities oriented towards the search for a certain knowledge” (RÚDIO, 1999, p. 9, our translation, it is worth considering, in advance, that our investigation was a part of a larger research entitled “Bullying: mecanismos psicológicos e intervenção ao problema” (Bullying: mechanisms psychological and intervention to the problem), which was coordinated by Professor Dr. Luciene Regina Paulino Tognetta (FCLAr – UNESP), organized in three axes: “Intervention Strategies: Support Systems among Equals”; “Bullying – family and university” and “Teacher Formation and overcoming Bullying”. Our research was part of the first axis and sought to investigate adherence to moral values in adolescents, as shown in Figure 1.
Figure 1 – Investigations conducted around bullying, its psychological mechanisms and interventions to the problem

Source: Togneta (2017)

Method

The quantitative and qualitative research with an exploratory and descriptive character was focused on investigating two problems. The first one was to answer if there are differences in the way three groups of young people adhere to moral values: students of Help Teams in schools with the implementation of this SAI, students who are not members of Help Teams in schools with the implementation of this SAI and students at schools that do not have Help Teams in place. The second problem was to answer whether adherence to the value of respect in hypothetical situations of bullying would be more related to adherence to the value of justice or solidarity.

To this end, four specific objectives are assumed: a) to compare the adherence to moral values – respect, justice and solidarity – by adolescents who participate in the Help Teams (SAIs) and by those who do not; b) verify whether adherence to the value of respect in hypothetical situations of bullying would be more related to adherence to the value of justice

3 Authorized by the Ethics Committee of the College of Sciences and Letters of Unesp, under number 65373417.0.0000.5400.
or solidarity; c) verify whether there would be a difference in this relationship for hypothetical situations of respect in which there is bullying and in which there is not; d) analyze whether there would be differences in responses in relation to gender.

We had the hypothesis that the students belonging to the Help Teams would present more evolved levels of adherence to moral values and, also, the hypothesis that, when situations where bullying was present in the hypothetical situations, we would find a greater relationship between the levels of adherence to respect and solidarity (compared to respect for justice), because we understand that bullying would also require a look of care and sensitivity to the pain of others, on the part of those who understand it.

The sample consisted of 2,513 adolescents (between 11 and 15 years old) from Elementary School II in private schools in the interior of São Paulo. Of this total, 1,147 referred to students who did not have the Help Teams (HTs) implemented in their schools, while 1,366 adolescent respondents were part of schools that had already implemented the Help Teams. Of these 1,366, 131 were students who were members of the HTs and 1,235 were students who were not members of the HTs, but belonged to schools with HTs implemented.

We used an instrument with closed questions about adherence to the moral values of respect, justice, solidarity and democratic coexistence, already validated by the Carlos Chagas Foundation (TOGNETTA; MENIN, 2017), applied in the aforementioned research to 10,011 respondents (among children, young people and teachers). In our case, the adapted instrument was divided into two parts, with closed questions, completed in the online version, on the Survey Monkey platform. In the first part, the instrument contained questions to characterize the respondents (age, gender, frequency of bullying and whether or not they participated in the Help Teams).

In the second part, the instrument focused on research on adherence to moral values. In this, we present twelve questions with hypothetical situations, three related to each value studied: solidarity, justice and respect. Exceptionally, this last value contained six stories related to it, three of them investigating respect in situations of bullying and cyberbullying and another three stories that presented situations of respect in common situations, to respond to one of our objectives. Each situation had five types of responses, three of them pro-value, that is, with attitudes that relate to the value in question and two counter-value, contrary to it.

Although the responses were divided into pro-value (P) and counter-value (C), the differences in responses also proposed different levels of social perspectives. The acronym P1 composes the pro-value responses at the level of egocentric social perspective, the least evolved
level of adherence to value, since it is given by individualistic motivations, considering one's own desires. The acronym P2, on the other hand, referred to responses from a *sociocentric social perspective*, considering that adherence to the value was due to something that was socially expected (rules, conventions, authorities), considering, for example, benefits to those close to them. And, finally, the answers that indicated the most evolved Justifications (acronym P3), pointed to adherence with a *moral social perspective*, understanding that there was a greater and universal principle that is good, fair and necessary for everyone. The responses that indicated countervalue are also classified in the same way, with C1 for responses of non-adherence to the value, with justifications from an *egocentric social perspective*, and C2 with justifications from a *sociocentric social perspective*. To exemplify, below is one of the hypothetical situations of the instrument that relates to the value of justice, whose countervalue is discrimination, with the abbreviations for the levels of countervalue or pro-value, described above. When the instrument was applied to the adolescents, the acronyms were not presented.

*In Professor Teresa's room, there are some very well-behaved and studious students and others, from the back rolls, who talk a lot and disturb the class. When doubts arise, the teacher should:*

**(C1)** pay less attention to the students in the back, after all, they disrupt the class.

**(C2)** give more attention to students at the front who respect the rules and are more studious.

**(P1)** treat everyone the same to avoid problems with students.

**(P2)** give equal attention to everyone because that's the school rule.

**(P3)** treat students the same, because everyone deserves equal attention.

We emphasize that a protocol of contact and authorization to carry out the research was carried out. After authorization by the Ethics Committee of the College of Sciences and Letters of Unesp for the use of the instrument in carrying out the research, the management teams of each school were contacted through a letter addressed to the director of the school and, based on such authorizations, the dates for data collection were scheduled during the regular class period of the male and female students, always with the presence of a researcher from GEPEM – Unesp/Unicamp, so that prior guidance or, if necessary, doubts while filling out the questionnaire, maintain scientific rigor. However, as they are minors, the Research Ethics Committee suggested that the TCLE (Portuguese initials) – *Term of Free and Informed Consent* – be forwarded in advance to the parents and/or guardians of the students. Thus, they were
informed of the nature of the research, of their child's participation in the investigation, including the guarantee of preserving their identity.

**Results**

The data obtained went through a statistical analysis in which the chi-square test was applied to verify possible associations between two variables. For all analyses, a significance level of 5% was adopted.

However, before presenting the data referring to each objective of the research, it is worth mentioning that, when verifying some characterization data, in particular, participation and what role or roles adolescents assume in bullying situations, we already found interesting data. We found that among male and female students who were part of the HTs, 5.34% called themselves authors, 11.44% victims and 59.54% spectators. In the group whose teenagers were not members of HTs but were part of a school where this proposal had been implemented, 11.74% were perpetrators, 15.06% victims, and 43.81% spectators, and among male and female students who belonged to schools whose HTs were not implemented, we found the percentages of 14.39% of authors, 18.04% of victims and 48.04% of spectators.

Let us verify, from then on, each objective of our research.

Our first objective was to compare the adherence to moral values – respect, justice and solidarity – by adolescents who participate in Help Teams (SAIs) and by those who do not. When we refer to “mode of adherence”, we understand that more than investigating adherence to the value itself, we would need to investigate the type of adherence of adolescents, since it permeates different forms of adherence, from the less evolved (egocentric social perspective), going through the sociocentric social perspective, to the most evolved, the moral social perspective, as we explained earlier. Thus, we focused on the answers related to the last one, category P3 - adherence to value from the moral social perspective. It is worth mentioning that categories P1 and P2 are also considered adherence, but at “weaker” levels, since they are given by egocentric and sociocentric social perspectives, respectively.

Table 1, below, shows the questions grouped by investigated value, and presents only the frequencies of responses in category P3, the highest level of adherence in each group of adolescents investigated.
Table 1 – Surveyed groups and adherence in P3 to the values of respect, justice and solidarity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>question number</th>
<th>Students who are members of HTs – schools with SAI</th>
<th>Students not members of HTs – schools with SAI</th>
<th>Students from schools without HTs (SAI)</th>
<th>value - p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respect in bullying situations</td>
<td>Q1&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>65 54.17</td>
<td>473 42.04</td>
<td>367 34.56</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>31 25.83</td>
<td>290 25.78</td>
<td>160 15.07</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>83 69.17</td>
<td>546 48.53</td>
<td>493 46.42</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect in non-bullying situations</td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>48 40.00</td>
<td>365 32.44</td>
<td>324 30.51</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>92 76.67</td>
<td>683 60.71</td>
<td>593 55.84</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>81 67.50</td>
<td>543 48.27</td>
<td>541 50.94</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity</td>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>54 45.00</td>
<td>430 38.22</td>
<td>410 38.61</td>
<td>&lt;0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>98 81.67</td>
<td>717 63.73</td>
<td>661 62.24</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>92 76.67</td>
<td>584 51.91</td>
<td>541 50.94</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>55 45.83</td>
<td>426 37.87</td>
<td>429 40.40</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>80 66.67</td>
<td>609 54.13</td>
<td>568 53.48</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>57 47.50</td>
<td>320 28.44</td>
<td>260 24.48</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bomfim (2019)

According to the previous table, it is possible to verify that male and female students who are members of the HTs presented a higher frequency of responses (with statistically significant differences – p< 0.05) related to adherence at a more evolved level (category P3 – level of moral social perspective), in all values surveyed, followed by the group of male and female students who belonged to schools with HTs already implemented, but who were not members of such group and, finally, the group with the lowest adherence in category P3 was that of adolescents from schools without Teams of help.

When analyzing the three questions that were related to respectful situations in which bullying was inserted (Q1, Q5 and Q11, in all p<=0.01), for example, Q11 had the highest frequency of responses in category P3, membership in a more evolved way. The group of members of HTs reached 69.17%, the group of male and female students from schools with HTs 48.53% and male and female students from schools without HTs 46.42% of the responses. Questions referring to the value of respect, but with no bullying situations included, were numbered Q4, Q8 and Q12, all p<=0.01. In this case, Q8 reached the highest percentages of adherence in P3 in the three groups surveyed, with 76.67% in the group of male and female students from HTs, 60.71% among male and female students from schools with HTs and
55.84% among adolescents from schools without HTs. When investigating solidarity, one of the questions did not present significant differences, since we obtained p=<0.46. However, the other two questions (Q7 and Q10, both p=<0.01) reached the highest percentages of frequency in adherence to the value in P3, comparing the three investigated values, in the group of male and female students of HTs. In Q7, the percentage of this group reached 81.67% and in Q10, 76.67%, while among male and female students from schools with HTs, the frequency was 63.73% and 51.91%, Q7 questions and Q10, respectively, and in the school without HTs, the levels of adolescents reached 62.24% and 50.94%. One of the questions that sought to investigate adherence to the moral value of justice, Q6, p=<0.17 also did not show statistically significant differences while the others with p=<0.01, Q2 and Q9 showed significant indices. The latter reached a frequency of 47.50% among HT members, but the rates were lower in the other two groups, 28.44% among male and female students from schools with HTs and 24.48% in schools without HTs.

Evaluating such data in general, we found that HT students have a higher frequency of adherence to moral values in the most evolved category of adherence, P3, followed by the group of male and female students who do not belong to such groups, but have HTs in their schools and, finally, to the group formed by adolescents from schools that do not have this type of SAIs, the HTs implemented in their institutions.

Our second objective was to verify whether adherence to the value of respect in hypothetical situations of bullying was more related to adherence to the value of justice or solidarity, and the third objective was to verify whether there was a difference in this relationship for hypothetical situations of respect in which there is bullying and in which there are none. For such verification, we understand by membership in category P3, any subject who has given at least one answer at that level – the most evolved – in one of the three stories referring to that particular value. We verified, therefore, that those who adhered to the value of respect in situations involving bullying in category P3 (level of moral social perspective), and who also adhered, in the same category, to the value of justice, added up to 79.40%, when while the adolescents who adhered to respect in P3, but did not adhere to justice at the same level, totaled 20.6%. Among those who adhered to respect and solidarity, both in category P3, the frequency reached 87.30%, while those who adhered to respect in P3, but not at the same level as solidarity, totaled 12.6%.
Table 2 – Relationship between adherence (in category P3) to the value of respect in situations involving bullying and the values of justice and solidarity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value / Categories</th>
<th>Respect in bullying situations</th>
<th>Value-p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not P3 (n=665)</td>
<td>P3 (n=1642)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Justice</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not P3</td>
<td>231 (34.7%)</td>
<td>338 (20.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>434 (65.3%)</td>
<td>1304 (79.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solidarity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not P3</td>
<td>146 (22%)</td>
<td>208 (12.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>519 (78.1%)</td>
<td>1434 (87.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bomfim (2019)

Similar data were found in situations of respect without bullying. The frequency among adolescents who adhered to the value of respect in situations without bullying and the value of justice, in categories P3, reached the percentage of 79.5%, while those who adhered to respect in category P3, but did not adhere to the value of justice in the same category reached only 20.5%. As for the relationship established between adherence to respect in situations without bullying and adherence to solidarity, 87.8% of the responses denote adherence to respect and solidarity, both in category P3, while those who adhered to respect in category P3, however, they adhered to solidarity not in the highest category, reaching 12.2% of the subjects, as shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3 – Relationship between adherence (in category P3) to the value of respect in situations without bullying and the values of justice and solidarity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value / Categories</th>
<th>Respect in non-bullying situations</th>
<th>Value-p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not P3 (n=425)</td>
<td>P3 (n=1882)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Justice</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not P3</td>
<td>184 (43.3%)</td>
<td>385 (20.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>241 (56.7%)</td>
<td>1497 (79.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solidarity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not P3</td>
<td>125 (29.4%)</td>
<td>229 (12.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>300 (70.6%)</td>
<td>1653 (87.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bomfim (2019)
Regarding this second objective, we had our hypothesis partially confirmed, since it was confirmed that those who adhere in a more evolved way to respect also adhere, in the same way in category P3, more to solidarity than to justice. However, we found no difference in adherence to respect in situations where there is bullying and where there is not. We understand that perhaps our instrument has not made clear all the characteristics by which a situation can be considered bullying or not, such as the intention to hurt, inequality of power between peers and repetition.

And, finally, our fourth and final objective was to analyze whether there were differences in responses regarding adherence to the moral values surveyed in relation to gender.

Despite not having in our initial objectives an analysis of the composition of the three investigated groups, from the perspective of the self-declared gender by the respondents, we observed interesting data. We did not find significant differences in the general composition of the sample of 2,513 adolescents, 1,265 girls and 1,248 boys, percentages of 50.34% and 49.66%, respectively. When analyzing separately the three investigated groups, there were no significant differences in two groups. In the group formed by male and female students who were not members of HTs, but who were part of schools with this SAI implemented, 51.26% were girls and 48.74% were boys. In the group formed by students belonging to schools without HTs, 47.52% were female and 52.48% were male. However, in the group formed by members of the Help Teams, the composition analyzed by self-declared gender showed a very different difference, being formed by 66.41% of girls, while boys totaled only 33.59%.

Our objective, however, regarding gender issues was to verify whether or not there was a difference in the responses of boys and girls. In this further analysis, we understood adherence to at least one response in a pro-value category (P1 – egocentric social perspective, P2 – sociocentric social perspective or P3 – moral social perspective). Below, Graph 1 presents the data found. In it, the horizontal line represents the twelve questions with the hypothetical situations, in which the values were at stake. The questions in which the value of respect in situations with bullying was inserted were Q1, Q5 and Q11, while those that also referred to respect, but in situations without bullying involved were Q4, Q8 and Q12. Justice was investigated through questions Q2, Q6 and Q9, and solidarity, finally, in questions Q3, Q7 and Q10.
The graph allows us to analyze that in all situations, girls were the ones with higher percentages of adherence, when compared to boys. The question with the highest female adherence (98.5%) compared to boys (91.4%) was number 5 (Q5), which referred to adherence to respect in a bullying situation. The second question (Q8) with the highest adherence by the girls involved a situation of solidarity, in which 97.14% of the girls responded in agreement, while 89.9% of the boys did the same. In contrast to this, the questions with the least adherence were questions related to justice: Q9 and Q2. However, despite the fact that adherence was lower compared to the other questions, we still observed a higher frequency of adherence by girls.

Analysis and discussion

Our research indicated that the group of boys and girls from Help Teams present higher percentages of adherence from the moral social perspective - the most evolved - to the moral values of respect, justice and solidarity, followed by the group of adolescents who are part of schools where this type of Peer Support System has been implemented. Among the three groups
surveyed, the one with the lowest rates of adherence at an advanced level was male and female students from schools without HTs.

Corroborating the data found, Spanish authors (AVILÉS MARTÍNEZ; TORRES VICENTE; VIAN BARÓN, 2008) have already pointed out data that HTs bring benefits to those who are part of it. In that survey, 33% of mothers and fathers of such students said that the work carried out in the HTs improved their son's or daughter's formation as a person, 25% indicated that this action collaborated so that their sons or daughters were more sensitive in the face of other people's problems and 25% said that they were more reflective. The male and female students were also able to carry out a self-assessment and 84% of them indicated improvement in helping skills and improvement in active listening; 75% of their fathers and mothers pointed out that there was an improvement in the adolescents' reflection before acting and, 50% said that there was an improvement in the active listening of their children and, finally, 69% of the male and female students and 83% of the parents, indicated that students had developed their empathy even more effectively.

However, we need to look at all male and female students, whether they are members of HTs or not. Several authors (COWIE; SHARP, 1996; COWIE; FERNANDEZ, 2006; AVILÉS MARTINEZ; TORRES VICENTE; VIAN BARÓN, 2008; COWIE, 2012; AVILÉS MARTINEZ, 2012, 2013) indicate that improving the quality of life in schools is the main objective of SAIs. Naylor and Cowie (1999) state that SAIs contribute to the personal and social education of young people, as well as strengthen the exercise of citizenship and, finally, help to create a socio-emotional climate of care in the school environment. In this sense, Cowie and Smith (2010) pointed out that, in general, SAIs implant a positive spirit of belonging and community in the school environment and, finally, the school tends to be perceived as a community that cares about relationships between students (NAYLOR; COWIE, 1999) and where students can share problems with each other (COWIE; HUTSON, 2005). Deepening this reflection on adherence to values, relating it to the roles assumed by adolescents in bullying situations – author, target or spectator, a later research than ours, which used the same database (TOGNETTA; OLIVEIRA; BOMFIM, 2021) presented even more detailed data, with victims being the group that showed the highest adherence, 81.03% to justice, followed by bystanders with 76.08% and those who have no involvement in bullying situations with 75.14%. The group with the lowest adherence to this value was that of authors with only 66.67%. As for the value of respect, the researchers found a significant difference in adherence among adolescents who participate in intimidating situations (whether as perpetrator, target or bystander) compared to
just bystanders. The data show that 59.18% of the participants (in any of the roles) adhered to the value of respect and, on the other hand, 73.4% of the spectators adhered to respect. The group that most adheres to the value of solidarity, according to the authors, is the target group with 89.66%, followed by the group of teenagers who have no participation with 86.66%, spectators with 85.14% and, finally, 72.92% of the authors adhere to this value.

Our previous hypothesis regarding the second and third objectives, which were interconnected, that adherence to respect was more related to adherence to solidarity than to justice, however, the data did not support our hypothesis that we would find a significant difference in situations of respect in which the bullying was included. For this last analysis, we verified a limitation in our instrument that the hypothetical stories that constituted bullying did not highlight some characteristics of intimidation that are essential to identify them, such as the intention to hurt, the repetition and the imbalance of power between the characters, which may have interfered with the understanding of such intimidation situations as bullying.

About the adherence to respect data being more related to solidarity than justice, let's analyze for now some research. Vale (2006), in his research, presented children of seven, ten and thirteen years old with a story-dilemma that brought the possibility of a generous act or, on the other hand, an act focused on the satisfaction of self-interest. 80% of respondents chose the generous action. However, 26.7% of these men and women initially tried to reconcile generous action with satisfying their own interests. The feeling of self-interest found in some responses does not contradict morality, since morality does not understand that it is necessary to abdicate one's own interests and, yes, incorporate them in altruistic actions (La Taille, 2006b). The highest percentage was found in the groups of 13-year-olds, followed by 7-year-olds, 80% and 60%, respectively, while only 20% of those in the 10-year-old group gave answers that walked towards generosity. Another research (La Taille et al., 1998) sought to investigate, in children aged 6 to 12 years, what responses they would give about ungenerous and unfair actions. The data showed that most 6-year-olds said that it would be more admirable to give their brother their favorite fruit (generosity) than to share a packet of cookies intended for both (justice). These children even dispensed sanctions on the ungenerous character, but not on an unjust one. In this way, La Taille (2006a, p. 188, our translation) states that “we can raise the hypothesis that, on the way to the ideal construction of justice, generosity [...] plays a role”, since this has a relevant relevance. psychological for moral construction.

Another research by the same author (La Taille, 2006b) wanted to analyze the role of generosity in the universe of children's morals and, therefore, asked the participants to
attribute feelings to the characters that were not fair and not generous. Respondents attributed positive feelings to the character who acted unfairly, while they attributed negative feelings to the character who acted in an ungenerous way. Generosity, concluded the author, is present in the genesis of human morality and, for this reason, it integrates and is better assimilated to moral conscience, due to the fact that it depends less on the rules and impositions arising from adults, which is common in issues involving justice at this stage of child development.

At the same time that generosity is present in the genesis of human morality (LA TAILLE, 2006b), other studies (VALE, 2006; VALE; ALENCAR, 2012) although they have not directed their investigations exclusively to adolescents, such as ours, have pointed to data in that the adolescents maintained their generous decisions, even if it was necessary to contradict an adult order. Although we cannot say that the feeling of sympathy (PIAGET, 1994 [1952]; 1994 [1932]) can be enough for such data to have been found, we believe that it can explain the children's choices towards generosity. However, “[...] it is neither a perennial guarantee of moral actions, nor a necessary feeling for all expressions of morality” (LA TAILLE, 2006b, p. 116, our translation).

It is necessary to consider that the acts of generosity inspired by sympathy are spontaneous and collaborate for a more autonomous understanding of the value of this virtue, since “[...] while the imposed rule gives more emphasis to obedience than to the target person of the prohibited action, sympathy does the opposite, giving more visibility to the other and, consequently, to one of the essential reasons for being of morality” (LA TAILLE, 2006b, p. 118, our translation). Eisenberg and Miller (1987) also indicated this look to the other, since they indicated this sensitivity called empathy, as the emotional state arising from the emotional state of the other and which leads to such a perception. We believe that for adolescents to opt for generosity (or solidarity, as in our research) it is necessary, in addition to the feeling of sympathy, that generosity or solidarity be a central value in their representations of themselves (LA TAILLE, 2002b) and motivate their acts.

Another investigation (TOGNETTA, 2006) verified that adolescents between 12 and 15 years old who had representations of themselves characterized by ethical content presented more evolved judgments regarding generosity and sensitivity to the feelings of the characters involved in the situations presented. According to the author, there is a correlation between the moral judgments related to generosity and the representations that the participants have of themselves.
We believe, therefore, that these adolescents with considerable levels of relationship between adherence (at a more evolved level) to respect and solidarity would be moved not only by reason, but by affection (EISENBERG; MUSSEN, 1989), especially by the feeling of empathy (also called sympathy, in its genesis, by PIAGET, 1994 [1952], 1994 [1932]), which moves them to become sensitized with the other, because the one or the other incapable of feeling sympathy “perhaps not even realizing the need of others, he would certainly not be moved by her and, therefore, would not act generously” (LA TAILLE, 2006a, p. 12, our translation).

And finally, let's analyze the data found on gender. Our question was: would there be differences between boys and girls in adherence to the values of justice, solidarity and respect? Before answering this question, one piece of information caught our attention.

A variable in our research was the participation in the Help Teams (HTs), which, unlike the general composition of respondents, which had 50.34% of girls and 49.66% of boys, presented a considerably higher percentage of girls – 66.41% girls and only 33.59% boys. We found that girls adhere more, compared to boys, in all values. In a survey (LA TAILLE, 2009), an attempt was made to investigate whether teenagers related 10 virtues to a given gender. When they did so in relation to a value that we investigated, generosity (in our case, solidarity), most of the respondents did not relate it to a specific gender. However, among those who chose to associate it with a specific gender, they did so in relation to the female gender: 46% of private school boys think they are equally generous women and men, but only 14% think it is a more masculine virtue while 40% think it is more feminine. In public school, 51% of boys believe it is a virtue of both genders, but only 13% of them cited boys as being more generous, while 36% as being more generous girls. The girls responded like their peers. Only 6% of those who study at private school attribute more generosity to men, 36% to women, and 58% attribute it to both genders. In public schools, we have 10% attribution of generosity to men, 32% to women and 58% to men and women equally. In the same survey, when boys thought that one of the genders was fairer than the other, most of them chose the male. The girls disagreed. As with generosity, most teens judged that there is no way to separate men and women when it comes to being fair. But among the boys who decided to choose between one of the genders, there was a greater attribution of this virtue to men. The attribution of this characteristic to boys from private schools totaled 37%, girls 17%, while for both genders the percentage was 46%. In the public school, the rates were: 28% of boys and 15% of girls indicated justice to men, and 57% listed it as being a virtue of both genders. However, the girls did not think so and did not judge men
superior in any character quality. In private school, 14% of girls chose justice as a masculine virtue, 11% as a feminine virtue and 75% as being of both genders. In public school, 21% of the options for girls listed men as being fairer, 20% as being fairer women and 59% as both genders having this virtue.

Both our investigation and others that seek this look and this understanding of gender and morality point to a new look and, for this, already announced by Gilligan (1982), which comprises two perspectives of moral understanding. In the first, moral decisions are based on justice, respect, individual rights and universal norms, which are more associated with a “masculine” perspective. According to Kuhnen (2014, p. 1, our translation), this would be the “default voice of morality”. Gilligan (1982) points us to another view, which she called a “different voice” that needs to be considered in the moral judgment, commonly associated with women, which considers the maintenance of care relationships between those involved in a conflict or moral dilemma. Her theory, however, does not intend to find a moral polarity between men and women, even because understanding the ethics of care as exclusively feminine tends to conservatism that understands women as typically responsible for care (KUHNEN, 2014). The author intended to investigate and propose different possibilities of perspectives and “voices” that exist when judging a moral dilemma that is not the only one suggested by the patriarchal society and that need to be considered and validated, since being able to develop other perceptions is necessary to deal with the moral problems representing “a transforming potential of society” (KUHNEN, 2014, p. 3, our translation). Gilligan (1982) states that she understands that both perspectives just highlight two different ways of understanding morality. The two approaches should not deny each other, but should complement each other, since they present different perspectives for the “same problem”. For the author, this complementarity, reconciling them, leads to what she called “moral maturity” (GILLIGAN, 1982).

As for the view that men would tend more to the ethics of justice and women to the ethics of care, when we check gender in the composition of HTs, what we have is a greater participation of girls (more than 66%). Although all members are chosen by classmates, the choice is based on characteristics of care (empathy, knowing how to listen, being observant, attentive, careful, reliable, discreet, among other values and characteristics). According to Kuhnen (2014), the integration of both visions contributes to overcoming the indifference that may exist in the perspective of justice, by establishing itself in individualization and separation, since when considering the perspective of care, it is also understood the need for empathy and
connection with the other. Certainly, as Pauer-Studer (1996, p. 27 *apud* KUHNEN, 2014, p. 6, our translation) rightly stated, there may be moral disrespect in the absence of both perspectives, as “it can occur not only through oppression and injustice, but also through abandonment, loss of emotional bond, or non-reaction to the claim of the other”.

**Final considerations**

From this study, it was found that the Help Teams were mostly composed of girls; and who showed the greatest adherence to respect, generosity and justice was the group composed of students who are part of HTs, followed by the group of students who were not members of HTs, but were part of school environments where this type of SAI already was implemented and, finally, the lowest adherence was found in the group formed by students who belonged to the school without any type of SAIs implemented.

It was also found that adherence to the three values was greater in girls and that there is a higher frequency of adherence to solidarity than to justice, among those who also adhered to respect, both in situations with bullying and in situations without bullying, in relation to those who did not adhere to respect.

Some limitations were also verified in our research. As previously highlighted, the fact that the questions related to the value of respect in bullying situations did not clearly show all the characteristics of this type of intimidation may have impaired the analysis and comparison between the variables. Future investigations in the area of Education and Psychology will be necessary for this purpose.

We believe in the need to expand studies related to moral development and coexistence, and with them, the possibility of indicating more effective strategies in school environments towards the reduction and eradication of intimidation among children and adolescents, so that the school becomes a learning space of ethical coexistence. However, it is also necessary to be very clear that isolated strategies, such as the Help Teams themselves, classes on Life Projects, teaching materials for the development of socio-emotional skills or isolated actions for discussing mental health, when carried out in juxtaposed ways, will not solve the problems of the school, given the need for a coexistence plan in which there are planned, systematized and intentional actions.

However, another certainty also remains: that, in the work of the Help Teams, concern and care for the other will be present, which establish a perception of zeal for each other in the school environment (NAYLOR; COWIE, 1999; COWIE; HUTSON, 2005). Certainly, an
environment where this type of relationship is present makes the much-desired (urgent and necessary) ethical coexistence real and possible.

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