Life Satisfaction of Students: Risk and Protective Indicators

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ABSTRACT – The aim was to test a predictive model for the life satisfaction of students in their final years of Elementary Education, considering risk predictors (exposure to violence and discrimination) and protective predictors (social skills, perception of social support, and sense of community), as well as the gender variable. Participants were 709 students who attended the 7th, 8[th,] and 9th grades of public schools in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Regression analyses indicated a final model, which explained 23% of the variability in life satisfaction. The data showed that personal, relational, and contextual resources function as protective factors for life satisfaction and can be promoted in interventions with students at the end of Elementary Education.

KEYWORDS: Life satisfaction, Protective Factor, Risk factor, Elementary Education

Satisfação com a vida de Estudantes: Indicadores de Risco e de Proteção

RESUMO – Teve-se como objetivo testar um modelo de predição para a satisfação com a vida de estudantes dos anos finais do Ensino Fundamental, considerando como preditores indicadores de risco (exposição à violência e discriminação) e de proteção (habilidades sociais, percepção de apoio social e sentido de comunidade), assim como a variável sexo. Participaram 709 alunos que frequentavam o 7º, 8º e 9º anos de escolas públicas do estado do Rio de Janeiro. Análises de regressão indicaram um modelo final, que explica 23% da variabilidade da satisfação com a vida. Os dados evidenciaram que recursos pessoais, relacionais e contextuais atuam como fatores de proteção à satisfação com a vida, podendo ser promovidos em intervenções com estudantes ao final do Ensino Fundamental.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Satisfação com a vida, Fator de Proteção, Fator de Risco, Ensino Fundamental

The school environment is understood as an important set in which dynamic exchanges occur that produce (and reproduce) socialization practices based on exclusion and discrimination, as well as promote well-being and allow a healthy course of socio-emotional development, when resources and support for this are provided (Ungar *et al.*, 2017). Adolescents spend most of their time at school, therefore this should be considered in investigations and interventions designed to promote academic performance and the well-being of students.

Subjective well-being is a positive dimension of mental health, systematized by Ed Diener (1984), and refers to emotional phenomena that include the investigation of three components: satisfaction with life (happiness), presence of positive affect, and absence of negative affect. For the author, while the first component can be related to the cognitive assessment of life, the other two refer to the affective dimension. The focus of the present study was life satisfaction, due to its importance for mental health and positive school trajectories during adolescence and the transition to adulthood (Moore *et al.*, 2019). Studies indicate that adolescents with high life satisfaction present more academic self-efficacy (Moksnes *et al.*, 2019), fewer behavior problems at school (Lyons *et al.*, 2014), and better academic performance (Achkar *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, these studies show, according to Ungar *et al.* (2017), that socio-emotional aspects and academic performance have a bidirectional influence, interacting reciprocally.

Considering that life satisfaction is impacted by aspects internal and external to the individual (Casas, 2011) and understood as a complex concept that integrates cognitive and affective dimensions (Diener, 1984), the present study focused on some risk and protective factors that affect the life satisfaction of students. According to Wright *et al.* (2013), risk and protective factors are not static aspects, and their differentiation is complex, as the same factors can act and function as hazards or protection, depending on the circumstances. Therefore, in this study, we use the terms risk and protective indicators. Risk indicators are defined as environmental or individual aspects that affect people, and can trigger negative results in their development (Wright *et al.,* 2013).

Among the indicators of risk for physical, socio-emotional, and cognitive development investigated in adolescence, exposure to violence, both in the family and in other environments, such as school, community, and workplace, stands out (Achkar *et al.*, 2019; Antunes *et al.*, 2020; Silva & Dell'Aglio, 2016; Varela *et al.,* 2018). Familial violence practiced by family members can occur in several ways (for example, neglect and physical, psychological, and sexual abuse), causing adolescents to present lower levels of life satisfaction (Achkar *et al.,* 2019; Silva & Dell'Aglio, 2016) and school problems, with worse academic performance (Achkar *et al.,* 2019). Investigations have indicated that there is a positive association between the presence of violence in the family and at schools; which is performed outside the family context and is related to different forms of aggression, such as physical, sexual, or psychological (Antunes *et al.,* 2020; Giordani & Dell'Aglio, 2016). These studies showed that adolescents who were victims of violence by family members also reported being bullied at school (Antunes *et al.,* 2020), had lower levels of life satisfaction, and more depression, anxiety, and stress (Giordani & Del'Aglio, 2016). These relationships indicate that adolescents who suffer violence in the family become more vulnerable to being victims of other forms of violence in other spaces, evidencing a break in interpersonal relationships present in contexts such as family and school, which are important for mental health and the well-being of these young people (Giordani & Del'Aglio, 2016).

Recently, together with the different forms of family and extrafamilial violence, discrimination has been investigated as an important indicator of risk for the mental health of adolescents and young adults (Williams *et al.*, 2019). According to Dovidio *et al.* (2000), prejudice refers to the system of disrespectful beliefs, thoughts, behaviors, and attitudes and pre-conceived reflective acts against someone, a social group, or a community. A development of this construct is the discrimination that results from the attribution of value to a social identity with the devaluation of the individual or a group based on differences due to some characteristic (Dovidio *et al.,* 2000). Therefore, the perception of discrimination refers to an action understood as unfair, by the person who suffers the act, being associated with an individual's belonging to a group considered socially stigmatized or with the incorporation of a characteristic, such as ethnic-racial, gender, physical appearance, and sexual orientation aspects (Major & Sawyer, 2009). Studies indicate that the perception of discrimination among adolescents and young adults is associated with depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, decreased self-esteem and self-efficacy, as well as lower levels of life satisfaction (Cheref *et al.*, 2018, Freitas *et al.*, 2017; Williams *et al.,* 2019), with this contributing to worse academic performance and a greater propensity to drop out of school (McWhirter *et al.*, 2017).

In addition to identifying threats to the life satisfaction of students and, consequently, to their academic success, studies that focus on students' resources and their contexts should be seen as a priority, as knowing which personal, relational, and social aspects work as protective mechanisms and promote the socio-emotional development of students, is an effective way to assist them in their academic and interpersonal formation. Protective indicators are individual and/or environmental characteristics that mitigate or avoid the impact of risk indicators, allowing individuals exposed to them to seek alternatives to face adverse situations (Wright *et al.,* 2013). During adolescence, social skills favor, among other things, the relationships with peers and family members, better school results (Costa & Fleith, 2019; Fernandes *et al.*, 2018), and the prevention of symptoms of depression (Campos *et al.*, 2018), constituting an important indicator of personal protection. Social skills can be defined as an individual's set of behaviors that are socially acceptable within a context, culture, and historical time, which contribute to social competence and promote healthy interpersonal relationships (Del Prette *et al.*, 2017). Accordingly, the personal resources of adolescents with social skills, such as the expression of feelings, self-control, empathy, and assertiveness, benefit from the potential that these skills have to protect the adolescent from adverse situations, in different contexts (such as family, education, work and clinical), being associated with better levels of life satisfaction (Achkar *et al.,* 2019; Cassoni *et al.*, 2017) and promoting their mental health.

The presence of protective personal resources, such as social skills, facilitates seeking social support by adolescents when they face interpersonal or school difficulties, contributing to life satisfaction (Achkar *et al.*, 2019; Cassoni *et al.*, 2017; Ronen *et al.*, 2016). The perception of social support is how people relate to and perceive the support of other significant people (Vaux *et al.*, 1986). During adolescence, there is an expansion and intensification of relationships between adolescents and other people besides family members, such as peers and teachers (Gaspar *et al.*, 2014). Studies show that the perception of social support from family members, peers, and teachers is associated with both good academic performance (Costa & Fleith, 2019; Fernandes *et al.*, 2018) and life satisfaction (Achkar *et al.*, 2019; Gaspar *et al.*, 2014). The diversity of sources of social support present in different contexts is shown to be important when adolescents face adversity, which can trigger

help from significant people from different environments. In this sense, McWhirter *et al.* (2017) observed that adolescents who had a good relationship with their peers and with the school managed to mitigate the effects of discrimination in their daily lives and did not think about dropping out of school. Therefore, it is noted that the social bonds created in different contexts are characterized as protective factors and important relational resources to deal with negative life experiences (Elvas & Moniz, 2010).

Studies have shown that the presence of a social support network and identification with the community (for example, neighborhood or country) by the person generate feelings of belonging, which can assume a protective role in the mental health and well-being of adolescents (Abreu *et al.*, 2016; Sarriera *et al.*, 2016). According to McMillan and Chavis (1986), the sense of belonging to the community is defined by participation, influence, interaction of needs, and shared emotional connection among subjects living in a place or frequent spaces, which make these connections possible. Research indicates that the sense of belonging to the community in adolescence is associated with higher levels of life satisfaction (Abreu *et al.*, 2016; Guzmán *et al.*, 2019), as well as reducing school dropout and involvement with bullying and cyberbullying (Varela *et al.*, 2019).

Scientific findings indicated that the understanding of subjective well-being in adolescence must involve the comprehension of variables in addition to personal dimensions, including relational aspects and collective needs (Casas, 2011; Sarriera *et al.*, 2016). The review of the literature shows that the presence of different forms of

violence (family, extrafamilial, and discrimination) in the contexts of socialization of adolescents is a persistent threat to the way they evaluate life satisfaction (Achkar *et al.*, 2019; Antunes *et al.*, 2020; Silva & Dell'Aglio, 2016; Varela *et al.*, 2018; Willians *et al.*, 2019). The results also highlighted the importance of investigating personal, relational, and contextual protective indicators that may prevent or mitigate the effects of risk indicators (Abreu *et al.*, 2016; Costa & Fleith, 2019; Fernandes *et al.*, 2018). This becomes even more important during adolescence, as researchers have found a decline in life satisfaction levels (Sarriera *et al.*, 2012; Ronen *et al.*, 2016) and those boys tend to present higher levels of life satisfaction than girls (Viñas *et al.*, 2019).

The comprehension of how risk and protective indicators affect the life satisfaction of adolescents may encourage interventions with students, to promote both well-being and academic performance, with the end of Elementary Education (EE) being the focus of the present study. According to the 2019 School Census of the Anísio Teixeira National Institute of Educational Studies and Research (INEP, 2019), the reproval rate is 24.7% in the final years of EE. Besides, in 2019, only 78.0% of students aged 16 completed EE, and 1.3 million students dropped out of school in the final years of EE between 2013 and 2018 (INEP, 2019). Based on the above considerations, the present study aimed to test a predictive model for the life satisfaction of students in the final years of Elementary Education, considering risk (exposure to violence, and discrimination) and protection predictors (social skills, perception of social support, and sense of community), as well as the gender variable.

METHOD

Participants

This was a correlational study with convenience sampling. The sample size was defined to fulfill the requirements for performing the regression analysis, in which, according to the recommendation of Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), it is necessary to have at least 30 subjects for each predictor variable. Participants were 709 students, aged between 11 and 17 years (M = 14.05 years; SD = 1.59), 364 (51.3%) girls and 345 (48.7%) boys. The students attended the 7th (n=199, 28.1%), 8th (n=263, 37.1%), and 9th grades (n=247, 34.8%) of Elementary Education in five public schools of the state of Rio de Janeiro. The schools were in peripheral regions, where families with low socioeconomic levels were prevalent.

Instruments

Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale – BMSLSS. This instrument was developed by Seligson *et al.* (2003) and validated for a sample of Brazilian

adolescents (aged between 12 and 16 years) by Bedin and Sarriera (2014). The BMSLSS is a measure of five items, with the sum of the subjects' results providing a global score for overall life satisfaction ($α$=.72). The scale contains responses that are arranged on an 11-point Likert-type scale, which ranges from terrible (0) to terrific (10). The items refer to satisfaction with the family ("I would describe my satisfaction with my family as"), with friends ("I would describe my satisfaction with my friends as"), with school experience ("I would describe my satisfaction with my school experience as"), with oneself ("I would describe my satisfaction with myself as") and with the place where one lives ("I would describe my satisfaction with the place where I live as"). In the present sample, an internal consistency index of .73 was found.

***Questionário da Juventude Brasileira* (Brazilian Youth Questionnaire – QJBra – Phase II Version):** This instrument is used to examine risk and protective factors for Brazilian adolescents and young adults (aged 14 to 24 years) from different contexts and socioeconomic levels. The questionnaire was developed by Dell'Aglio *et al.* (2011) and contains 77 multiple-choice questions, arranged on a

five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from never (0) to always (5). In the present study, the following items were selected, with the internal consistency indices for the present sample: (1) *Exposure to familial violence* (α=.55) *and extrafamilial violence* (α=.44): with 10 items that assess the frequency of abuse ("Threats or humiliation", "punching or spanking", "Aggression with objects"," Touching my body against my will", "Forced sexual intercourse"); (2) *Discrimination* (α=.78): measured by 11 items that assess the frequency of different reasons for discrimination throughout life ("Due to living where I live – neighborhood, shanty town", "Due to the color of my skin").

Brief Version of the *Inventário de Habilidades Sociais para Adolescentes* (Social Skills Inventory for Adolescents-IHSA). This inventory was developed by Del Prette and Del Prette (2009) and evaluates the social skills of adolescents based on their self-reports regarding everyday situations. The short version consists of 16 items and includes four factors, with the following consistency indices, according to Leme *et al.* (2017): (1) empathy ("When a colleague is having difficulty in some task at school or work, I offer my help", α=.78,); (2) self-control ("When I am unfairly criticized, I manage to respond without losing control", α=.66); (3) assertiveness ("I can take the initiative and end the conversation with another person", α=.75); and (4) affective approach (" When I feel like being with someone, I say this to him/her at the first opportunity", α=.69). The answers are arranged on a Likert-type scale of four points, ranging from never (0) to always (4), in which the adolescent is asked to evaluate the frequency with which they present the reaction. In the present study, the following internal consistency indices were found: .73; .71; .75; and .70, respectively; total α=.75.

Social Support Appraisals (SS-A) Scale – SSA. Vaux *et al.* (1986) developed this instrument to examine the perception of children and adolescents regarding social support from family and friends. The short version consists of 23 items arranged on a six-point Likert-type scale, which varies from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (6), with four factors, with the following internal consistency indices for the present sample: (1) Perception of social support from the family (α=.87, "My family is very concerned about me"); (2) Perception of social support from friends (α=.81, "I feel very connected to my friends"); (3) Perception of social support from teachers (α=.82, "I am very appreciated by my teachers"); and (4) Perception of social support from others ("I am respected by most people"); total score (α=.87). The scale was validated for the Brazilian adolescent population (aged between 9 and 18 years) by Squassoni *et al.* (2016), with Cronbach's alpha values between .71 and .83 for the factors and .89 for the total. Since the aim of this study was to identify the influence of the student's perceptions of specific social support, social support from others was not used.

Sense of Community Index – SCI: This was originally developed by Chavis *et al.* (1986) and adapted for a sample of Brazilian children and adolescents by Sarriera *et al.* (2015). The instrument is composed of nine items that assess the person's relationship with their community/neighborhood. The answers are arranged on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (0) to strongly agree (4). It presents two factors, with the following internal consistency indices: (1) Positive link with the community (α=.74, "I feel at home in this neighborhood"); (2) Community relations between neighbors (α=.58, "If there is a problem in this neighborhood, people who live here can solve it") and total α=.78. In the present sample, the following internal consistency indexes were found: .73; .74, respectively; total α=.75.

A questionnaire covering demographic information. This was designed for the study, aiming to investigate social and demographic information, such as widespread application information; name, age, gender, skin color, and history of academic failure – whether the person had already failed a year and how many times, number of family members and indication of who lived with the student.

Procedures

Ethical Considerations

Consistent with Resolution 466/12 of the National Health Council, the project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee at State University of Rio de Janeiro (CAAE: 74416117.0.0000.5282).

Data collection

After the assent of students and the consent of their legal guardians, data collection took place collectively in classrooms, in a single application, with a mean duration of fifty minutes, at the time agreed with the teachers.

Data analysis

Data analysis was performed using the SPSS, version 22.0 software. First, the assumptions of normality were tested and confirmed. Subsequently, the correlation between variables was calculated (Pearson's *r* coefficient). To interpret the magnitude of the correlation coefficients, the following values were adopted: <0.20 = very low; >0.20 and <0.40 = low; >0.40 and <0.70 = moderate; >0.70 and <0.90 = high; > 0.90 = very high (Bryman & Cramer, 1999). Finally, the assumptions of independence and multicollinearity for the predictive model were tested and confirmed, with the hierarchical regression analysis then conducted. The life satisfaction of the students was the outcome variable in the model. In Block 1, the gender demographic variable was included. Block 2 included the risk indicators: exposure to family and extrafamilial violence; and discrimination. In Block 3 (protective indicators – personal), social skills were included and, in Block 4 (protective indicators – relational and contextual), the perception of social support (peers, family, and teachers) and sense of community variables were inserted.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the correlations between the indicators of risk (exposure to family and extrafamilial violence and discrimination), protection (social skills, perception of social support from peers, family, and teachers, and sense of community), and life satisfaction of the students. Most of the associations were of low magnitude. All the risk indicators correlated negatively with the life satisfaction of the students. All the protective indicators were positively associated with the life satisfaction of the students.

The data from the regression analyses are presented in Table 2. The prediction model for the life satisfaction of the students indicates that, in Block 1 (sociodemographic variable),

Table 1
Correlations between Risk and Protective Indicators and the Life Satisfaction of Student

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. LS	1								
2. Vio_Fa	-0.21**	1							
3. Vio_Ex	-0.11**	0.35**	1						
4. DISC	-0.17**	0.22**	0.34**	1					
5. SS	0.17**	-0.06	-0.02	0.10**	1				
6. PSS_Pe	0.32**	-0.19**	-0.09*	-0.08*	0.27**	1			
7. PSS_F	0.34**	-0.36**	-0.14**	-0.20**	0.17**	0.38**	1		
8. PSS_Te	0.22**	-0.12**	-0.02	-0.11**	0.24**	0.41**	0.36**	1	
9. SBC	0.32**	-0.11**	-0.01	-0.07*	0.09**	0.17**	0.22**	0.25**	1

Note. LS = Life satisfaction. Vio_Fa = exposure to violence in the family. Vio_Ex = exposure to violence outside the family. DISC = Discrimination. SS = Social skills. PSS_Pe = Perception of social support from peers. PSS_F = Perception of social support from family. PSS_Te = Perception of social support from teachers. SBC = Sense of belonging to the community.
$^*p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$

Table 2
Hierarchical Regression for the Prediction of Life Satisfaction of Students in the Final Years of Elementary Education

Predictors	B (SE)	β	95% CI	R^2	ΔR^2
Block1 – Demographic					
Gender	1.74(0.60)	0.10**	[0.54; 2.93]		
$F_{(1.70)}$ variation = 8.16*				0.01	0.01
Block 2 – Risk indicators					
Exposure to violence					
Family	-0.59(0.13)	-0.17**	[-0.85; -0.32]		
Extrafamilial	-0.03(0.17)	-0.01	[-0.38; 0.30]		
Discrimination	-0.16(0.04)	-0.12*†	[-0.25; -0.06]		
$F_{(4.70)}$ variation = 12.94**				0.06	0.05
Block 3 – Protective indicators – personal					
Social Skills	0.13(0.02)	0.18**†	[0.08; 0.18]		
$F_{(5.70)}$ variation = 15.84*'				0.09	0.03
Block 4 – Protective indicators – relational and contextual					
Perception of social support					
Peers	0.20(0.04)	0.17**†	[0.11; 0.29]		
Family	0.17(0.04)	0.14**†	[0.08; 0.26]		
Teachers	0.02(0.05)	0.01	[-0.10; 0.10]		
Sense of community	0.32(0.04)	0.23**†	[0.22; 0.42]		
$F_{(9.70)}$ variation = 24.60**				0.23	0.14

Note. B = Unstandardized regression coefficient. SE = Standard Error of the unstandardized regression coefficient. β = standardized regression coefficient. CI = Confidence Interval. R^2 = adjusted coefficient of determination. ΔR^2 = change of coefficient of determination due to the entry of the blocks. Gender (0 = female; 1 = male).
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. † Predictors that remained in the final model.

gender (male) accounted for 1% of the variation in the result. With the inclusion of Block 2 (risk indicators), exposure to violence in the family and discrimination explained 5% and negatively predicted the life satisfaction of the students. The entry of Block 3 (protective indicators – personal) accounted for 3% of the variation in the life satisfaction of the students, with social skills positively associated with the outcome. Finally, with the inclusion of Block 4 (protective indicators – relational and contextual), the perception of social support from peers and family and the sense of community explained 14% of the variation and were positively associated with the life satisfaction of the students. The final model, which explains 23% of the variability in the life satisfaction of the students, was composed, in order of importance, of the sense of community, social skills, perception of social support (peers and family), and discrimination variables.

DISCUSSION

Corroborating previous studies, the results of the correlation analyses showed that the students exposed to family and extrafamilial violence (Achkar *et al.*, 2019; Antunes *et al.*, 2020; Silva & Dell'Aglio, 2016; Varela *et al.*, 2018) and discrimination (Cheref *et al.*, 2018, Freitas *et al.*, 2017; Willians *et al.*, 2019) presented less satisfaction with life. Conversely, in line with previous literature, students with social skills (Achkar *et al.*, 2019; Cassoni *et al.*, 2017) and who perceived social support from family, peers, and teachers (Achkar *et al.*, 2019; Gaspar *et al.*, 2014) and had feelings of belonging to the community (Abreu *et al.*, 2016; Guzmán *et al.*, 2019) presented more satisfaction with life. These findings show that life satisfaction is a cognitive dimension of multidetermined subjective well-being, being influenced by variables that are internal and external to the person (Casas, 2011). Therefore, the investigation of life satisfaction must involve personal, relational, and contextual aspects that function as indicators of risk and or protection of well-being during adolescence.

Concerning the regression analysis, the final model explained 23% of the variance in the life satisfaction of the students in the final years of EE, with the entry of protective indicators (relational and contextual) corresponding to a greater increase in the explanation of the variance in life satisfaction. With the entry of the variables of Block 4, there was an increase in explanatory power to the other blocks, therefore, the model explained from 9% to 14%, consisting of the variables with the greatest impact on the outcome. The sense of community was the variable with the greatest weight, indicating that when the students perceived more of a connection with the people in their neighborhood, they were more satisfied with life, in agreement with other studies (Abreu *et al.*, 2016; Guzmán *et al.*, 2019). The interpersonal relationships contained in the adolescent community can provide social support, mutual relations, identification processes, physical and emotional availability, and representativeness in the collective spaces, favoring the feeling of belonging and the healthy development of the members (Evas & Moniz, 2010; Sarriera *et al.*, 2016). This becomes even more relevant, considering that the present sample consisted of adolescents who lived in places (*favelas* or *comunidades*) characterized by the presence of urban violence and precariousness, or a lack of public services related to leisure, education, health, and safety.

Also in Block 4, aligned with the results of other studies (Achkar *et al.*, 2019; Gaspar *et al.*, 2014) the perception of social support from peers and family was a positive predictor of the life satisfaction of the students. The presence of various sources of social support (family, friends, teachers, etc.) allowed the construction of a support network that can be triggered by adolescents when faced with demands that require emotional support, school guidance, or even financial aid (Olsson *et al.*, 2016). Accordingly, these relational resources available, for example, in the family provide adolescents with feelings of security, in addition to support with school issues, providing greater levels of well-being (Gaspar *et al.*, 2014). It should be highlighted that the perception of social support from teachers was not a predictor of the life satisfaction of the students, which was also evidenced by Achkar *et al.* (2019). The school context can provide the connection with peers and teachers that become sources that are essential to increasing good academic performance (Costa & Fleith, 2019; Fernandes *et al.*, 2018) and well-being during adolescence (Ronen *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, actions must be implemented in the school context seeking to encourage the formation of bonds between students and teachers, especially in the final years of EE, where failure and dropout rates are high (INEP, 2019), which further weakens the interactions between students and their educators. Among possible strategies to be implemented in the school context, interventions that promote the social skills of students and the educational social skills of teachers stand out, as these are behaviors that are covered by the educational task that has the aim of promoting development and learning (Leme *et al.*, 2016; Vieira-Santos *et al.*, 2018).

In Block 2 (risk indicators), exposure to family violence and discrimination were negative predictors of the life satisfaction of the students, contributing 5% of the variability in the outcome, although, in the final model, only discrimination remained as a significant negative predictor. This result is different from other studies that have repeatedly shown that adolescents who suffer family violence have lower levels of life satisfaction (Achkar *et al.*, 2019; Silva & Dell'Aglio, 2016), as well as present more

internalizing symptoms and are more likely to experience violence in different contexts, such as in the family, school, and community (Giordani & Dell'Aglio, 2016). Therefore, a hypothesis for the absence of a relationship between exposure to violence in the family and satisfaction with life should consider that the phenomenon of violence is complex and influenced by numerous factors. The results presented here referred to a specific measure of violence (intra and extrafamilial), possibly not covering the entire spectrum of this phenomenon. Discrimination, on the other hand, harmed the way the students assessed their own lives, in line with previous studies (Cheref *et al.*, 2018, Freitas *et al.*, 2017; Willians *et al.*, 2019). According to McWhirter *et al.* (2017), different forms of discrimination (for example, racial, sexual orientation, and gender) experienced by students impair the sense of belonging to the school context, negatively affecting relationships with friends and teachers, culminating in low academic performance and increasing the chance of dropping out of school. The perception of discrimination, as well as other forms of violence, affects the mental and physical health of adolescents and young people, being an important sign of suffering that must be investigated and the target of school interventions and public policies.

Block 3, when testing the impact of social skills on life satisfaction, indicated that this personal protection resource was a positive predictor, explaining 3% of the outcome, corroborating previous studies (Achkar *et al.*, 2019; Cassoni *et al.*, 2017). These skills favor the emergence of positive interactions between students and their interlocutors, in the main contexts of coexistence, facilitating recognition and the seeking of support networks when faced with adverse situations (Costa & Fleith, 2019; Fernandes *et al.*, 2018). Ungar *et al.* (2017) highlighted, in turn, that access to interpersonal relationships that provide social support is associated with positive developmental results in adolescence and the promotion of well-being. Block 1, with less explanatory power regarding the variability of life satisfaction of the students (1%), showed that being male was a positive predictor of the outcome, although it did not remain in the final model. Sarriera *et al.* (2012) found no differences in life satisfaction related to the sex of adolescents, suggesting that sociability practices according to gender may have a reduced impact. The authors state that the results of studies about differences according to gender are divergent and may be due to the choice of instruments that assess life satisfaction and the characteristics of the sample, suggesting that more studies should be carried out.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The aim was to test a predictive model for the life satisfaction of students in the final years of EE, considering risk predictors (exposure to violence and discrimination) and protective predictors (social skills, perception of social support, and feeling of community), as well as the gender demographic variable. The final model, which explained 23% of the variability in the life satisfaction of the students, was composed, in order of importance, of the sense of community, social skills, perception of social support (peers and family), and discrimination variables. These findings corroborate the understanding that subjective well-being is a global construct and its cognitive dimension – satisfaction with life – is influenced by personal aspects (for example, social skills), as well as relational and contextual aspects (for example, feeling of belonging to the community, social support, and experiences of discrimination). The results of this study contribute to a better understanding of some protective and risk indicators that act in the student's daily lives at the end of EE and influence the way they assess satisfaction with their own lives, considering the reciprocal relationships between these young people and their contexts. This information can be used in future interventions to promote the positive development of students at the end of EE.

Among the limits of the study, firstly, the data were collected considering the school context, with it being important to expand the investigation to other contexts, such as the family and community. Secondly, due to the use of the cross-sectional design, it was not possible to identify changes in the behavior of the students over the final years of EE, which could be done through a longitudinal investigation. Thirdly, the predictive model indicated that 23% of the variability in the life satisfaction of the students was explained by the predictive variables. This coefficient of determination is considered small, which suggests that other variables may influence these aspects, and should be investigated in future studies. Taking into account the limitations, future studies could: (1) expand the sample, including students from private schools and rural areas; (2) include information obtained from other informants, such as family members and teachers; (3) investigate other predictors of life satisfaction, such as the educational practices of parents and teachers; and (4) implement interventions to promote positive development in the school environment with students, their families, and teachers.

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