

PERCEIVED SUPPORT, SATISFACTION AND CONNECTEDNESS IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEACHERS: A STUDY OF ADOPTED ADOLESCENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Adopted children tend to face challenges at school. Many have special educational needs and learning problems (DeJong, Hodges, & Malik, 2016). These difficulties derive mainly from early experiences of adversity, such as prenatal mistreatment, neglect, abuse, and institutionalization (Fishman & Harrington, 2007). In addition, school is an ideal context for socialization, with peer and teacher relationships being important aspects for a positive school climate (Wang & Degol, 2016). Recent research shows that many adoptees may also have difficulties in this area. This could be related to adoptees' greater difficulty in maintaining attention and concentration, problems controlling and regulating emotions and greater impulsivity, disruptive or defiant behaviors (e.g., Brown, Waters, & Shelton, 2017). Nevertheless, Lutes, Johnson and Gunnar (2016) found lower school connectedness for adoptees that had been institutionalized, but no differences between foster care adoptees and the control group.

Positive relationships with teachers and connectedness at school are fundamental aspects for school satisfaction and wellbeing (e.g., Jose, Ryan & Pryor, 2012; Suldo et al., 2009) that need more attention in adoption research. It is also important to combine different levels of analyses when studying student-teacher relationships, since while generally speaking student-teacher relationships tend to become less close during adolescence, most adolescents single out specific teachers they feel connected to (García-Moya, Brooks & Moreno, 2019). For that reason, **the aim of this poster** was to analyze adolescent adoptees' perceptions of their relationships with teachers and to explore whether there are differences in the perceived quality of student-teacher relationships between adopted and non-adopted adolescents.

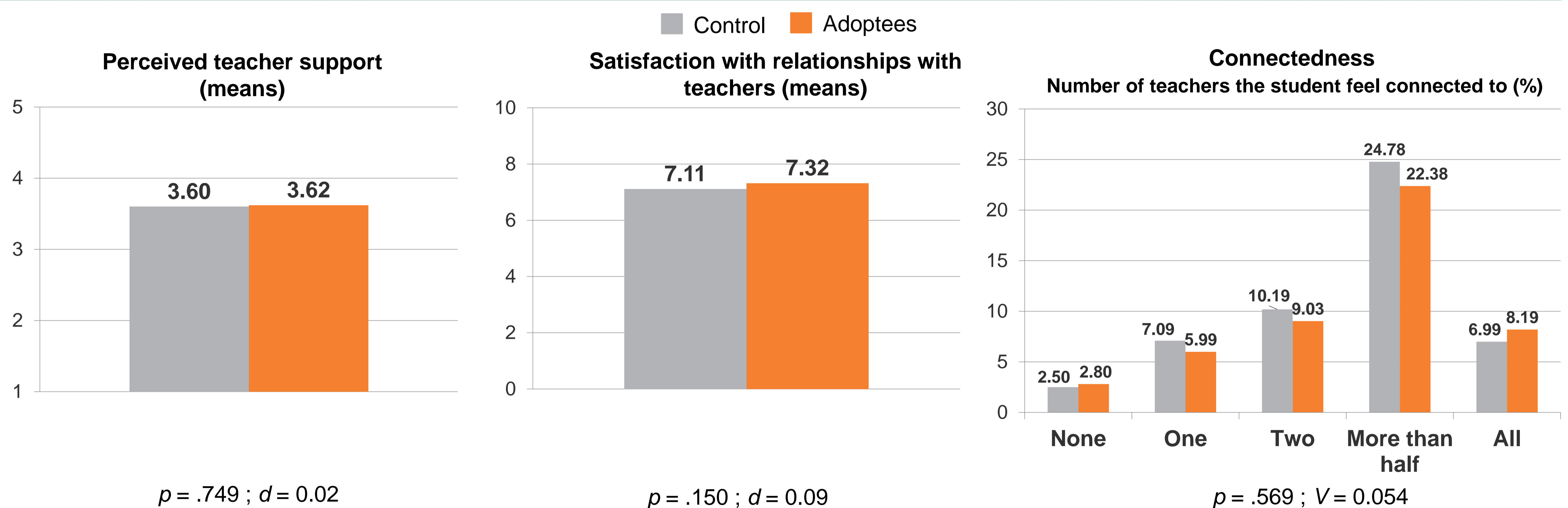
METHOD

Participants: The sample consisted of 1,123 adolescents (45.3% boys, 54.7% girls) aged 11 to 18 years who took part in the 2018 edition of the WHO collaborative study *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children* (HBSC) in Spain. Of them, 541 were adopted and 582 were not adopted (this group is formed of community adolescents and it is used as a comparison group).

Instruments: Measures included an adaptation of Cantril's Ladder (Cantril, 1965) for the assessment of satisfaction with relationships with teachers, the HBSC scale for the assessment of teacher support, and a measure of teacher connectedness that assess the availability of teachers the student feel connected to, which was developed as part of the *Teacher Connectedness Project*.

Procedure and statistical analyses: Bivariate analysis were performed using t tests or Chi-square tests and controlling for gender and age. Cohen's *d* and Cramer's *V* were used to measure the effect size.

RESULTS



DISCUSSION

We found **important similarities between adopted and non-adopted adolescents**, both using general assessments of teacher support ($p = .749$) and satisfaction with teachers ($p = .150$), and in terms of the availability of teachers they felt connected to ($p = .569$). These results support the need to study adoption from a perspective of normality instead of the pathological view which has been predominant in the history of the study of adoption (e.g. Paniagua, Moreno, Jiménez-Iglesias, & Rivera, 2019). Despite previous research pointing to adoptees' difficulties in relationships at school (Brown et al., 2017; Lutes et al., 2016), adoptees in this study have **good relationships with teachers and, as their non-adopted peers, identified some teachers they felt connected to**. At the light of these findings, an hypothesis is that difficulties in relationships at school may be more common with classmates than with teachers. In order to deepen our current understanding of adoptees' school experiences, future research should incorporate other school climate indicators such as classmate support and levels of teacher connectedness, as well as explore the potentially mediating or moderating effects of behavioral problems in adoptees' school life.

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