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# Predicting psychological well-being in gay men and lesbians: Retrospective bullying and psychosocial factors

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## ABSTRACT

Among the different difficulties gay-men and lesbians must face it is worth mentioning the high probability of being victims of bullying in their childhood and/or adolescence. To be more specific, our results show that more than half of the gay men and lesbians who took part in the study, have suffered some kind of harassment, and a 21.7% of them was a victim of bullying because of being homosexual. This fact, combined with the problem of creating social networks which provide support, difficulties when it comes to accepting their own sexual orientation and acceptance by other significant figures of homosexuality are capable of influencing on subjects' psychological well-being. Along with these factors, instrumentality and expressiveness dimensions of gender identity can also be factors which may influence on psychological well-being.

The results obtained in this study, carried out with 119 gay men and lesbians, suggest that the frequency of bullying suffered in childhood and/or adolescence influences today on subjects' psychological well-being and, more specifically, on depression and anxiety levels.

Our results also confirm the importance of social support provided by friends as well as the significance of counting on the acceptance of one's sexual orientation by families. However, the social support provided by families and the acceptance of homosexuality by close social networks do not seem to be significant regarding psychological well-being. Moreover, instrumental gender features seem to contribute to psychological well-being whereas expressive features exert the opposite effect.

**Keywords:** *Psychological well-being, anxiety, depression, affective balance, self-esteem, social support, homosexuality acceptance, instrumentality, expressiveness.*

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## Introduction

Homosexual people make up a group with a high-risk of social exclusion. This exclusion can take place from an early age, being one of its signs the fact of becoming victims of bullying at school.

In this regard, some results suggest that those subjects who have been victims of bullying and are culturally stigmatized are more likely to suffer mental health problems and experience a variety of symptoms leading to post-traumatic stress due to the unremitting nature of the suffered bullying (Leymann & Gustaffson, 1996).

The research on bullying shows that, among other factors, victimization is related to depression and anxiety (Carney & Merrell, 2001; Craig, 1998; Salmon, James, Cassidy & Javaloyes, 2000), poor social and emotional adjustment (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Nansel et al., 2001) and poor self-esteem (Carney & Merrell, 2001; Olweus, 1994). The meta-analytic review carried out by Hawker and Boutton (2000) suggests that victimization is highly related to depression and not so highly to anxiety.

Some results also point to the fact that the victim status appears to be relatively stable over time (Olweus, 1977, Rivers, 2001).

Many of the symptoms mentioned as a result of post-traumatic stress (Mauk & Rodgers, 1994), have also been found in homosexuals experiencing difficulties when it comes to accepting their sexual orientation (Friedman, 1991; George & Behrendt, 1988; Pilkington & D'Augelli, 1995). Additionally, some studies carried out with homosexuals have proved that the combined effect of bullying and difficulties in accepting one's sexual orientation is related to the onset of a number of mental health problems (Rivers, 2004). In this respect, Hershberger & D'Augelli (1995) found that the best predictor of mental health among homosexual people was self-acceptance, as well as that such self-acceptance was associated with the support provided by families but

only for those who had experienced low bullying levels. Nevertheless, support provided by family members did not mitigate mental health problems for those who had experienced high bullying levels.

On the whole, social support has not only positive effects on psychological well-being but also a protective function against the negative effects of stressful life events (e.g. Cohen & Wills, 1985; Henderson, 1992; Lin & Peek, 1999; Schwarzer & Leppin, 1992; Turner & Turner, 1999).

Social support can be conceptualized as a resource which promotes the attainment of aims and the resolution of everyday tasks, besides offering protection against those risk factors associated with adversity (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Hobfoll, Dunahoo & Monier, 1995). Indeed, the degree of social support experienced within one's own context has an impact on mental health (Vinokur & van Ryn, 1993).

Some researches carried out with gay and lesbian couples have shown that friends and partners provide further social support (Kurdek, 1988) and are perceived as a more important and frequent source of social support than families (Bryant & Demian, 1994; Elizur & Mintzer, 2003; Green, 2000; Green & Mitchell, 2002; Kurdek, 1988, 1989).

Along with the abovementioned factors, instrumentality and expressiveness features concerning masculine and feminine gender identity, respectively, stand out among the predictors of psychological well-being. Thus, instrumentality is related to traditional well-being measures (Bassoff & Glass, 1982; Sharpe, Heppner & Dixon, 1995). To be more specific, the lack of masculine instrumentality in the personality is related to poor self–esteem (Payne, 1987; Sharpe, Heppner & Dixon, 1995; Whitley, 1983, 1988), anxiety (Payne, 1987), and depression and poor adjustment (Bromberger & Matthews, 1996; Whitley, 1985). On the other hand, several studies have shown the moderating effect of instrumentality in the relation between negative stressful effects

and psychological symptoms, not only for men but also for women (Nezu, Nezu & Peterson, 1986; Roos & Cohen, 1987; Wagner & Compas, 1990), whereas high expressiveness has the opposite effect (Wagner & Compas, 1990).

Nevertheless, some studies, kept within the bounds of the so-called model of androgyny, show that the latter is the one related to self-esteem, that is to say, the concurrence of instrumental and expressive features is associated with subjects' higher self-esteem (Hollinger, 1983; Stake, Zand & Smalley, 1996).

The aim of this study is to evaluate to what extent gay men and lesbian subjects' psychological well-being can be explained starting from a stressful event suffered in childhood and/or adolescence such as having been a victim of bullying, and to what extent self-acceptance of one's homosexuality, instrumental and/or expressive personality features, emotional social support and perception of acceptance-rejection of one's homosexuality by others can modulate such psychological well-being.

## Method

### Participants

119 subjects took part in this study, 85 men and 32 women (2 subjects did not tell their sex) between the ages of 17 and 57 ($\bar{x} = 37.9$, $SD = 8.24$). Most of the subjects declared themselves homosexuals (96.6%), and only 4 of them bisexuals.

**Instruments**

To begin with, the subjects answered to a number of *socio-demographic questions* aimed at establishing a descriptive profile of the sample which has taken part in this study.

*Predicting and Moderating Variables*

*Level of Suffered Bullying*. It was measured by means of a reduced version of the instrument created by Olweus (1994) consisting of 12 items. Two indicators of this variable were used, the first which we have called *bullying* assembles whether the subjects had been victims of bullying in childhood and/or adolescence. The second, called *bullying frequency* shows the frequency (0=no harassment, 1=sometimes, 2=once a week, 3=several times a week) of harassment suffered by the subject.

*Degree of Sensitivity to Rejection regarding Their Sexual Orientation*. The operationalization of this construct was carried out by means of the *Social Situation Scale* (McDonald, 1984) created with the purpose of measuring homosexual men's sensitivity to the rejection perceived regarding their sexual orientation and, indirectly, the degree of acceptance of their own sexual orientation. Thus, this scale assembles the degree of uncomfortableness felt by subjects when facing social situations in which their sexual orientation can be exposed to others. The original scale consists of 19 items, and 3 more items were added in which the same social situations were included but these concerning homosexual women, using a five points likert scale (1=none, 5=a lot). The Cronbach alpha index obtained in our study was 0.92.

*Gender Identity*. Masculinity-instrumentality and femininity-expressiveness were operationalized by means of the *Bem Sex Role Inventory* (Bem, 1974) adapted to

the Spanish population and later revised by Vergara (1993). This scale has a five points likert scale (1=never, 5=always). Cronbach alpha coefficients obtained in our study were 0.80 for the masculinity-instrumentality scale and 0.81 for the femininity-expressiveness scale.

*Perceived Social Support Provided by the Family and Friends*. The scales used were those proposed by Procidano and Heller (1983) consisting of 20 items each. Although three answer options (yes, no, I don't know) are given in the original scale, in the present research we chose to use a five points likert scale (1=none, 5=a lot) in order to make the answer format of all the instruments be homogeneous. The Cronbach alpha coefficients obtained in our study were 0.93 and 0.96 for the scales of social support perceived from friends and the family, respectively.

*Perception of Acceptance of Homosexuality by the family and the close social network*. The scale used was a reduced version (Elizur & Mintzer, 2003) of that proposed by Ross (1985). Such scale consisted of 16 items aimed at measuring subjects' perception of acceptance of their homosexuality by their family (8 items) and their close social network (8 items). As the previous scales, a five points likert scale was used (1=rejects, 5=accepts). The obtained internal consistency indices have been acceptable ($\alpha_{Cronbach}$=0.74 and $\alpha_{Cronbach}$=0.80, for family and close social network subscales, respectively), especially if it is taken into account the low number of items of each subscale. In order to operationalized this variable, two indices were built called the perception of family acceptance index and the perception of acceptance by close social network index. Both indices were defined, respectively, as the interaction between the perception of acceptance by the family/close social network (operationalized starting from the total score obtained in each subscale) and the number of family/close social network members who know about their homosexuality.

*Well-being Measures*

As dependant variables and subjects' psychological well-being indices, depression, anxiety, affective balance and self-esteem were measured.

*Depression*. A reduced version of the *Beck Depression Inventory* (Beck, 1961) was used consisting of 13 items previously adapted and validated within our context (Paéz & Echevarria., 1986) obtaining an internal consistency index of $\alpha_{Cronbach}$=0.88 in our sample.

*Anxiety*. A *reduced scale of anxiety* was used, from the Anxiety Situations and Responses Inventory, *ASAI* (Miguel & Cano, 1986) in which the general level of anxiety is evaluated starting from cognitive, physiological and motor responses provided by the subject. This scale consisted of 17 items with a five points likert scale (1=never, 5=always). The value of the Cronbach alpha coefficient obtained in this study has been 0.93.

*Affective Balance*. Affectivity or mood has been measured by means of the *Positive Affect-Negative Affect Scale (PANAS Scale)* (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988) which consists of 20 items with a likert type answer response (1=none, 5=a lot). The difference between the negative and positive affectivity subscales provides a measure for the subject's affective balance. The obtained reliability indices have been 0.92 and 0.81 for the negative and positive affectivity subscales, respectively.

*Self-esteem*. Finally, the subject's self-esteem level was measured by means of Rosemberg's Self-esteem Scale (1965). It is a one-dimensional scale consisting of 10 items with a likert type answer format (1=completely at variance, 5=completely in accordance). The Cronbach alpha index obtained for this scale was 0.85.

**Design and Procedure**

A transversal selective design has been used. Given the nature of the population we were interested in, the sample selection was carried out by means of a non-probabilistic sampling. We contacted the main gay men, lesbian and bisexual associations in Gipuzkoa (Spain) arranging an appointment with the person in charge in order to present the study and ask for their assistance. Then, each member of the association was sent an envelope enclosing a questionnaire, a letter explaining the study in which they were going to take part and a prepaid envelope to re-send the questionnaire once it was completed and thus guaranteeing the anonymity of their answers. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed from which 119 were completed and re-sent. The subjects took part anonymously in the study and got no financial compensation for taking part in it.

## Results

*Socio-demographic Profile*

The socio-demographic profile of our sample shows us that, regarding the marital status, most of the subjects (75.6%) were single, a 14.3% has a de facto partner, a 4.3% is separated or divorced and the 3.4% lives with his/her partner legally registered. From the total of subjects, the 56.8% has a partner currently and a 34.5% lives with him/her. Regarding the education level, the 47.1% has a complete university education, the 10.9% an incomplete university education, the 26.9% completed secondary education, a 14.3% primary education and only a subject did not complete

primary education. Regarding their occupation, the 72.3% has a permanent working contract, the 13.4% a temporary job, a 3.4% is retired or is a pensioner, a 5% is a student, a 1.7% is unemployed and just one person is a houseperson. Concerning religious believes, the 40.3% declares himself/herself a Catholic, a 1.7% a Protestant, the 0.8% a Jewish, a 1.7% belongs to another religion, the 27.7% says not to have a religion and a 27.7% does not believe in God. On the other hand, the 63.9% says not to practice religion, the 24.3% does it occasionally and a 7.6% does it often or every day. Concerning political ideology, the 25% takes a stand for the extreme left, a 60.3% defines himself/herself as moderate left-wing, the 11.2% considers himself/herself of center and the 3.5% manifests high sympathies for the moderate right. Finally, and with regard to the monthly income level, the 26.1% receives less than 1000 euros a month, the 53.9% earns about 1000 and 2000 euros a month, a 17.4% gets about 2000 and 3000 euros a month and the 2.6% earns more than 3000 euros a month.

*Bullying*

The 51.7% of the subjects who make up the sample said not to have suffered any kind of harassment during their school time. The 78.9% of these was bullied once on a while, a 1.7% suffered moderate harassment and the 19.3% said to have been victim of bullying several times a week. On the other hand, the 21.7% suffered harassment because of being homosexual, whereas the rest of them suffered it because of other reasons. Among such reasons the following stand out: weight, height or body shape (n=18), appearance and dressing way (n=10), due to the friends they had (n=5), because of not being good at sports (n=20) and other reasons (n=13).

Regarding the way they have been bullied, the majority of the subjects pointed out that they had been the target of insults (n=34) and rumors (n=22). nineteen people

pointed out that they had suffered other kinds of psychological harassment (isolation, intimidation, writings, etc.) and only a subject pointed out having been a victim of physical harassment (blows or kicks).

Concerning the time they have suffered the harassment, the 54.7% pointed out that this had taken place while studying primary education, the 23.4% suffered it during high school/professional education, a 18.7% started suffering harassment during their primary education and this went on in high school/professional education and just a 3.1% said to have been bullied in university.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that the majority (n=9) of those who suffered severe harassment (n=11) pointed out that the reason was their homosexuality.

*Predictors of Psychological Well-being*

Next, we will present the results obtained from the analysis of multiple regression carried out with the aim of explaining subjects' depression, anxiety, balance of affects and self-esteem. So as to do so, nested models were compared hierarchically for each dependent variable in order to select the model which, without having differences with the complete model, proves to be also more parsimonious.

The following variables were included as factors in the four analyses of multiple regression which were carried out: masculinity-instrumentality (1), femininity-expressiveness (2), social support perceived from friends (3), social support perceived from the family (4), degree of sensibility to rejection regarding their sexual orientation (5), perception of family acceptance (6), number of family members who know about their homosexuality (7), perception of family acceptance index (interaction between 6 and 7) (8), perception of acceptance by close social network (9), number of members in

the close social network who know about their homosexuality (10), perception of acceptance by close social network index (interaction between 9 and 10) (11), bullying frequency (12) and bullying (yes-no) (13).

Regarding the results obtained for the depression variable, as it can be seen in table 1, there are no discrepancies between the complete and the reduced model, reason why the latter, being more moderate, will be the one will use as a explaining model of depression.

Thus, the final model obtained for the depression variable shows that the 45.2% of the total variability in such variable is explained by family rejection of homosexuality, low masculinity-instrumentality and high femininity-expressiveness, low social support perceived from friends, high uncomfortableness experienced in social situations related to homosexuality and, finally, bullying frequency (see table 2). Observing the values of standardized beta coefficients as well as the partial and semi-partial correlations, we can conclude that the low social support from friends, the low masculinity-instrumentality and the family rejection of homosexuality are the best predictors of depression.

Table 1. Regression Model Comparison for Depression.

| Model | | Δ residual | Δ *df* | $F_{partial}$ | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Complete Model | All | 1048.97 | 97 | | |
| Final Model | 1,2,3,5,6,7,8,12 | 1088.68 | 104 | 0.749 | 0.589 |

Table 2. *Final Regresión Model for Depression.*

| Final Model | *b* | *SE(b)* | *β* | *t* | *p* | *CI95%(b)* | $sr^2$ | $pr^2$ | *Tolerance* | *VIF* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | 20.425 | 4.006 | | 5.099 | 0.000 | 12.48 to 28.36 | | | | |
| (1) | -0.112 | 0.037 | -0.235 | -3.066 | 0.003 | -0.18 to -0.04 | 0.046 | 0.083 | 0.834 | 1.20 |
| (2) | 0.103 | 0.040 | 0.200 | 2.552 | 0.012 | 0.02 to -0.18 | 0.032 | 0.059 | 0.798 | 1.25 |
| (3) | -0.102 | 0.030 | -0.304 | -3.387 | 0.001 | -0.16 to -0.04 | 0.056 | 0.101 | 0.609 | 1.64 |
| (5) | 0.066 | 0.026 | 0.221 | 2.516 | 0.013 | 0.01 to -0.11 | 0.031 | 0.058 | 0.634 | 1.57 |
| (6) | 0.485 | 0.303 | 0.154 | 1.602 | 0.112 | -0.12 to 1.08 | 0.012 | 0.024 | 0.532 | 1.88 |
| (7) | 1.000 | 0.431 | 0.483 | 2.318 | 0.022 | 0.14 to 1.85 | 0.030 | 0.049 | 0.113 | 8.86 |
| (8) | -0.286 | 0.109 | -0.609 | -2.624 | 0.010 | -0.50 to -0.07 | 0.033 | 0.062 | 0.091 | 11.02 |
| (12) | 0.772 | 0.353 | 0.159 | 2.188 | 0.031 | 0.07 to 1.47 | 0.023 | 0.044 | 0.922 | 1.08 |
| | | | | $F(8,104)=12.53$; $p=0.000$ | | | $R^2_{adjusted}=0.452$ | | | |

(1) Masculinity-instrumentality, (2) Femininity-expressiveness, (3) Friends social support, (5) Social Situation Scale, (6) Perception of family acceptance, (7) Number of family members, (8) Perception of family acceptance index, (12) Bullying frequency.

Concerning the anxiety variable, as in the previous case there are no differences between the complete and the reduced models (see table 3), therefore we will use this second one, being more parsimonious, as a explaining model of this variable. Such model (see table 4) shows that the 30% of the total variability in the anxiety variable is explained by high femininity-expressiveness, perception of rejection of homosexuality by the close social network and bullying frequency. After observing not only the values of standardized beta coefficients but also the partial and semi-partial correlations, we can conclude that the rejection of homosexuality by the close social network and the bullying frequency are the best predictors of anxiety.

Table 3. *Regression Model Comparison for Anxiety.*

| Model | | Δ residual | Δ *df* | $F_{partial}$ | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Complete Model | All | 8433.784 | 100 | | |
| Final Model | 2,9,10,11,12 | 9553.944 | 110 | 1.693 | 0.109 |

Table 4. *Final Regresión Model for Anxiety.*

| Final Model | *b* | *SE(b)* | *β* | *t* | *p* | *CI95%(b)* | $sr^2$ | $pr^2$ | *Tolerance* | *VIF* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | 13.616 | 8.416 | | 1.618 | 0.109 | -3.06 to 30.29 | | | | |
| (2) | 0.250 | 0.107 | 0.191 | 2.344 | 0.021 | 0.03 to 0.46 | 0.033 | 0.047 | 0.921 | 1.086 |
| (9) | 0.722 | 1.286 | 0.060 | 0.561 | 0.576 | -1.82 to-3.27 | 0.001 | 0.002 | 0.530 | 1.886 |
| (10) | 6.390 | 1.454 | 1.135 | 4.395 | 0.000 | 3.50 to 9.27 | 0.117 | 0.148 | 0.091 | 10.93 |
| (11) | -1.528 | 0.327 | -1.323 | -4.672 | 0.000 | -2.17 to-0.88 | 0.133 | 0.165 | 0.076 | 13.14 |
| (12) | 2.717 | 0.992 | 0.220 | 2.739 | 0.007 | 0.75 to 4.68 | 0.045 | 0.064 | 0.947 | 1.056 |
| | | | F(5,110)=10.79; p=0.000 | | | $R^2_{adjusted}$=0.299 | | | | |

(2) Femininity-expressiveness, (9) Perception of acceptance by close social network , (10) Number of close social network who knows their homosexuality, (11) Perception of acceptance by close social network index, (12) Bullying frequency.

As regards self-esteem, nor are there in this case differences between the complete and the reduced models (see table 5), this is why we will use the latter, which is more parsimonious, in order to explain this variable. Said model (see table 6) shows that the 36% of the total variability in the self-esteem variable is explained by high masculinity-instrumentality and low femininity-expressiveness, high social support perceived from friends and family acceptance of homosexuality**.** Observing the values of standardized beta coefficients and the partial and semi-partial correlations, we can reach the conclusion that the high social support perceived from friends and the family acceptance of homosexuality are the best predictors of self-esteem, not obviating the important contribution to the explained variance of the masculinity-instrumentality variable.

Table 5. *Regression Model Comparison for Self-esteem.*

| Model | | Removed | Δ residual | Δ *df* | $F_{partial}$ | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Complete Model | All | | 2806.012 | 103 | | |
| Final Model | 1,2,3,6,7,8 | | 3120.794 | 112 | 1.682 | 0.121 |

Table 6. *Final Regresión Model for Self-esteem.*

| Final Model | *b* | *SE(b)* | *β* | *t* | *p* | *CI95%(b)* | $sr^2$ | $pr^2$ | *Tolerance* | *VIF* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | 27.884 | 0.878 | | 4.744 | 0.000 | 16.23 to 39.52 | | | | |
| (1) | 0.214 | 0.059 | 0.293 | 3.631 | 0.000 | -0.12 to 1.08 | 0.071 | 0.105 | 0.838 | 1.194 |
| (2) | -0.168 | 0.065 | -0.216 | -2.597 | 0.011 | -0.297to -0.40 | 0.036 | 0.056 | 0.788 | 1.270 |
| (3) | 0.176 | 0.044 | 0.351 | 4.027 | 0.000 | -0.90 to 0.26 | 0.088 | 0.126 | 0.720 | 1.389 |
| (6) | -1.742 | 0.487 | -0.362 | -3.578 | 0.001 | -2.70 to -0.77 | 0.069 | 0.102 | 0.533 | 1.876 |
| (7) | -1.442 | 0.623 | -0.464 | 2.316 | 0.022 | -2.67 to -0.209 | 0.029 | 0.045 | 0.136 | 7.340 |
| (8) | 0.549 | 0.163 | 0.765 | -3.370 | 0.001 | 0.22 to 0.871 | 0.062 | 0.091 | 0.106 | 9.428 |
| | | | | F(6,112)=11.861; p=0.000 | | | $R^2_{adjusted}$=0.356 | | | |

(1) Masculinity-instrumentality, (2) Femininity-expressiveness, (3) Friends social support, (6) Perception of family acceptance, (7) Number of family members, (8) Perception of family acceptance index.

Finally, the comparison of the models with regard to the affective balance variable does not show any differences between the complete and the reduced models (see table 7), therefore the latter, being more parsimonious, will be presented as a explaining model of this variable. Such model (see table 8) shows that the 28% of the total variability in the affective balance variable is explained by high masculinity-instrumentality and low femininity-expressiveness, high social support perceived from friends and family acceptance of homosexuality**.** If we observe the values of standardized beta coefficients as well as the partial and semi-partial correlations, it can be concluded that the best predictor of the affective balance is the high social support

perceived from friends**.** The low femininity-expressiveness makes an important contribution to the explained variance as well.

Table 7. *Regression Model Comparison for Affective Balance.*

| Model | | Removed | Δ residual | Δ *df* | $F_{partial}$ | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Complete Model | All | | 7792.687 | 101 | | |
| Final Model | 1,2,3,6,7,8 | | 8304.905 | 108 | 1.106 | 0.364 |

Table 8. *Final Regresión Model for Affective Balance.*

| Final Model | *b* | *SE(b)* | *β* | *t* | *p* | *CI95%(b)* | $sr^2$ | $pr^2$ | *Tolerance* | *VIF* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | -2.181 | 9.882 | | -0.221 | 0.826 | -21.7 to 17.40 | | | | |
| (1) | 0.268 | 0.101 | 0.231 | 2.666 | 0.009 | -0.69 to 0.46 | 0.044 | 0.062 | 0.842 | 1.188 |
| (2) | -0.354 | 0.108 | -0.293 | -3.278 | 0.001 | -0.56 to -0.14 | 0.067 | 0.090 | 0.788 | 1.269 |
| (3) | 0.280 | 0.073 | 0.359 | 3.834 | 0.000 | -0.13 to 0.42 | 0.092 | 0.119 | 0.720 | 1.389 |
| (6) | -0.759 | 0.809 | -0.102 | -0.939 | 0.350 | -2.36 to 0.84 | 0.005 | 0.008 | 0.538 | 1.860 |
| (7) | -2.035 | 1.048 | -0.421 | -1.942 | 0.055 | -4.11 to 0.04 | 0.023 | 0.033 | 0.134 | 7.463 |
| (8) | 0.631 | 0.273 | 0.566 | 2.312 | 0.023 | -0.90 to 1.172 | 0.033 | 0.047 | 0.105 | 9.528 |
| | | | | $F(6,108)=8.467$; $p=0.000$ | | | $R^2_{adjusted}=0.282$ | | | |

(1) Masculinity-instrumentality, (2) Femininity-expressiveness, (3) Friends social support, (6) Perception of family acceptance, (7) Number of family members, (8) Perception of family acceptance index.

## Discussion

The results of the study show higher prevalence of harassment among homosexual subjects than that found in previous studies carried out concerning heterosexual population (Olweus, 1991, 1993), mainly with regard to regular victimization rates.

Besides, the results obtained in different works are confirmed (Carney & Merrell, 2001; Craig, 1998; Salmon, James, Cassidy & Javaloyes, 2000) according to

which bullying is related to depression and anxiety. Nevertheless, our data do not show a relation between bullying and low self-esteem (Carney & Merrell, 2001; O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001).

In the sense proposed by Rivers (2004), it seems to be corroborated that along with bullying, the degree of sensitivity to rejection regarding homosexuality, which can be understood as subjects' difficulty in accepting their sexual orientation, is also a predictor of depression. Nevertheless, this self-acceptance as a gay-man or lesbian is not proved to be the best predictor of mental health among homosexuals (Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995). This contradictory result may be due to the way this construct has been operationalized in our study. In this regard it must be remembered that we are measuring: the degree of uncomfortableness gay and lesbian subjects feel when facing social situations in which their sexual orientation is exposed, a variable from which the degree of subjects' acceptance with regard to their homosexuality can be inferred. Nevertheless, it must be taken into account that, despite not being the best, it is one of the predictors of the depression variable.

Regarding social support, that provided by friends is an important well-being factor, due to the fact that it has proved to be one of the best predictors of lack of depression, accurate affective balance and high self-esteem. Moreover, our results corroborate those obtained by Kurdek (1988) with regard to the fact that, for gay-men and lesbians, friends provide social support more frequently. It is also confirmed that, compared to families, friends are a more frequent and important source of social support (Bryant & Demian, 1994; Elizur & Mintzer, 2003; Green, 2000; Green & Mitchell, 2002; Kurdek, 1988, 1989). It must be added to this result the fact that rejection of homosexuality by the close social network is among the best predictors of anxiety. Moreover, we consider to be a result of great importance the fact that even though social support provided by friends is of great importance when it comes to explaining gay men

and lesbians' well-being, family acceptance-rejection of homosexuality has proved to be one of the best predictors of depression and affective balance, being also a predictor of self-esteem. Thus we can conclude that, whereas friends are an important source of social support, families are necessary as a source of acceptance of one's sexual orientation when it comes to attaining psychological well-being.

Subjects' gender identity has also proved to be another importance variable as a explanatory factor of psychological well-being. As it is shown by our results, not only high instrumentality (Bassoff & Glass, 1982; Sharpe, Heppner & Dixon, 1995), but this, combined with low expressiveness (Wagner & Compas, 1990), is associated with psychological well-being. Thus, the results obtained in this study show that psychological well-being would be more accurately explained from the masculinity-instrumentality model than from the androgyny model.

As a conclusion, our results seem to show that the bullying frequency suffered in the past has an important influence on the subject's psychological well-being, causing higher levels of depression and anxiety among subjects having been more exposed to this kind of harassment. In this regard, it is worth emphasizing that depression has proved to be the best explained indicator of psychological well-being given the predictors used in this study. Thus, the profile of a gay-man or lesbian presenting higher levels of depression would correspond to that of a subject who has suffered bullying in his/her childhood or adolescence more frequently than the rest, who can be defined as highly expressive-feminine and not very instrumental-masculine, who feels highly uncomfortable when exposed to social situations which show his/her sexual orientation up, who receives little social support from friends and whose family rejects his/her homosexuality. On the other hand, the profile of a subject with higher levels of anxiety would correspond to a gay-man or lesbian who has suffered bullying in his/her

childhood or adolescence much more frequently, highly expressive-feminine and whose close social network rejects his/her homosexuality.

Nevertheless, positive indicators of well-being (self-esteem and affective balance) present an identical profile regarding its predictors. Thus, both indicators would be related to having instrumental-masculine features, lack of expressive-feminine features, high social support provided by friends and family acceptance of homosexuality.

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