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As the first article we present, *Suicide seen from clinical psychology with a psychoanalytic orientation*, by Ortega-Martínez, María Cristina, Pérez-Castillo, Pablo and Nieves-Chávez, Mayra Araceli, with adscription Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro, as second article we present, *Myths of romantic love and sexist violence in courtship. A gender-focused university extension exercise applied by students*, by Gutiérrez-Zenteno, Sheila Xoloxochitl, Marín-Levario, Carmen Guadalupe, Gálvez-Rendón, Marco Antonio and Enríquez-García, Roldán, with secondment at the Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas and Universidad Intercultural de Chiapas, as third article we present, *Study habits and anxiety in secondary school students*, by Lozano-Gutiérrez, Jorge Luis, Pacheco-Amigo, Beatriz Mabel and Solís-Recéndez, Emma Perla, with adscription in the Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas, as last article we present, *Teaching strategies in educational robotics courses with a playful approach and segmented by age [2018-2025]* by Sánchez-Delgado, Octavio, Vargas-Flores, Rosario, Hernández-Guzmán, Julieta Edith and Noguerón-Soto, Alfonso, with attachment at the Universidad Tecnológica de Tehuacán.

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## Suicide seen from clinical psychology with a psychoanalytic orientation

### El suicidio visto desde la psicología clínica con orientación psicoanalítica

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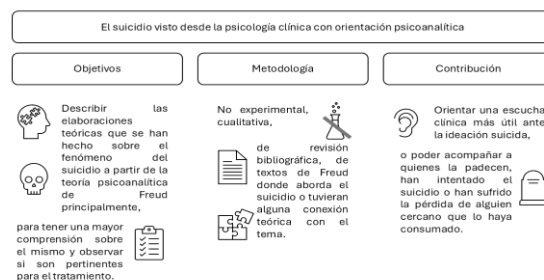
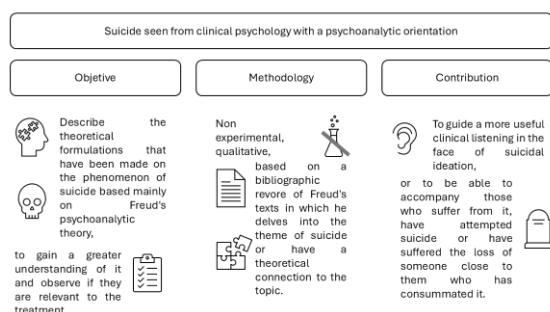
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#### Abstract

The issue of suicide has generated concern, unease and countless views on the phenomenon. This work is based on the objective of describing the theoretical elaborations that have been made on the phenomenon of suicide based on Freud's psychoanalytic theory and some other contributions from other psychoanalysts, in order to gain a greater understanding of it and whether this can guide a more useful clinical listening approach to suicidal ideation, or to be able to accompany those who suffer from it, have attempted suicide or have suffered the loss of someone close to them who has committed suicide. Thus, based on psychoanalytic reflections, some notions will be reformulated insofar as they are currently relevant to addressing the phenomenon of suicide. Questioning whether prevention is possible, but more than that, whether there is a right to die, as there is a right to live. And suicide, as both a social and individual phenomenon.

#### Resumen

El tema del suicidio ha generado inquietud, desasosiego y un sinnúmero de vistas al fenómeno. Este trabajo parte del objetivo de describir las elaboraciones teóricas que se han hecho sobre el fenómeno del suicidio a partir de la teoría psicoanalítica de Freud y algunas otras aportaciones de otros psicoanalistas, para tener una mayor comprensión sobre el mismo y si esto puede orientar una escucha clínica más útil ante la ideación suicida, o poder acompañar a quienes la padecen, han intentado el suicidio o han sufrido la pérdida de alguien cercano que lo haya consumado. Así, a partir de las reflexiones psicoanalíticas, se reformularán algunas nociones en tanto si son pertinentes en la actualidad para hacer el abordaje del fenómeno del suicidio. Además, cuestionarnos sobre si es posible la prevención, pero más que eso, si hay un derecho a morir, como el de vivir. El suicidio visto como hecho social e individual.



#### Suicide, Clinical psychology, Psychoanalysis

#### Suicidio, Psicología clínica, Psicoanálisis.

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## Introduction

The issue of suicide has generated concern, unease and countless views on the phenomenon. It is undoubtedly a topic that affects everyone, from family life to its impact on work, and, of course, the generation of knowledge on the subject in order to address, intervene and prevent it.

According to the [World Health Organisation](#), in the most recent statistics, suicide is among the 20 leading causes of death worldwide for people of all ages and, according to their statistics, one occurs every 40 seconds. It also indicates that it is the fourth leading cause of death among young people [aged 15 to 29].

This also means that one in every 100 deaths is due to suicide, and it occurs more frequently in low- to middle-income countries. It also established an international day for suicide prevention, on 10 September, which seeks to raise awareness about non-discrimination and the correct approach to mental illness, considering that the management and reduction of these, as well as some addictions, will serve as prevention for suicide.

This work is based on the objective of describing the theoretical elaborations that have been made on the phenomenon of suicide based on Freud's psychoanalytic theory and some other contributions from other psychoanalysts, in order to gain a greater understanding of it and whether this can guide a more useful clinical listening approach to suicidal ideation, or to be able to accompany those who suffer from it, have attempted suicide or have suffered the loss of someone close to them who has committed suicide.

Thus, based on psychoanalytic reflections, although not directly on the subject of suicide, but rather on the psychic mechanisms that may manifest themselves in the treatment of suicidal ideation, some notions will be reformulated insofar as they are currently relevant to addressing the phenomenon of suicide.

From thinking about the subject of death and what this untransmittable experience means for human beings, as well as, in particular, how psychoanalysis explains this phenomenon, this type of decision.

There are several readings or interpretations that could be made, such as: a failure in the social bond [a social fact, as Durkheim says], a loosening of the family bond, or a desire to die, a drive, a transgression of the 'duty to live'; or, as psychoanalysis often suggests, it will be the case-by-case analysis that can answer the questions about why someone commits suicide.

## Methodology

A non-experimental, qualitative methodology of bibliographic review was used, observing texts of psychoanalytic theory that address suicide or have some theoretical connection to the subject of suicide, more specifically in the work of Sigmund Freud. Other philosophical texts referring to the subject of death and suicide have also been reviewed.

## Results

We found some themes that build lines of argument about the subject of suicide from psychoanalytic theory, which we can list as follows:

1. Death in psychoanalysis, linked to the subject of life and death drives, as well as the notion of the self, the other and loss.
2. When addressing the life and death drives, reference is also made to their mixing and unmixing. These moments of unmixing are where, from a theoretical perspective, masochism and sadism can be observed. These are characteristics of the subject that will be related to guilt and punishment.

Therefore, it is a look inside the subject and whether their motivation for suicide is a kind of self-punishment.

3. Recognising the internal conflict raised by Freud, from the instances referred to as the superego and the ego, in this sadomasochistic pairing, suicide could be thought of as this sadism turned towards the ego and seeking its annihilation. However, a characteristic of sadism is to preserve its object, not to make it disappear.

Therefore, it is possible that failed suicide attempts are related to this conflict and successful ones are not.

4. Regarding defence mechanisms, such as denial, taking into account the phrase that can be said in the consulting room, 'I don't want to live', it can be understood that, as Freud suggests, the 'no' that precedes the "want" in the phrase is actually expressing the opposite. However, the phrase should be continued with 'I don't want to live like this'.
5. Questioning whether prevention is possible, but more than that, whether there is a right to die, as there is a right to live. Opening the discussion on assisted suicide as opposed to euthanasia.

Addressing the reference to the terms suicidal and suicidal tendencies, whereby we are all on the path to death, only in different ways.

6. Find some ideas about the causes of suicide, as both a social and individual phenomenon.

### **On the idea of one's own death.**

Death is a difficult subject to address. Historically, it has been understood from different perspectives, as something natural, something magical, something particular. In truth, death has been a subject of religion, while science has a slightly more determined and unquestioned view of it.

It represents an end, a moment that will come, although for religion it is only a step to another form of life, for science, for the experience of the death of another, it is an end.

When Sigmund Freud addresses the subject of death, he does so to describe one of the two main drives of the Subject. To talk about these two forces that are constantly at odds with each other, the life drive and the death drive: Eros and Thanatos.

Names taken from the forces described in Greek mythology. Thus, Freud mentions that the life drive seems to be the stronger, the one that unites, that seeks movement, that moves towards activity, while the death drive insists on separating, on disorganising, on reaching the end, on non-activity.

But in his text 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle,' he rightly says that if there is a strong drive, it is the death drive, for every living organism has a tendency to return to its origin, and if it started from the inanimate, it will return to it.

Thus, life is that journey towards death. In other words, there is a compromise between both drives, which is why they are understood to be mixed most of the time, until they separate at precise moments, but more clearly when the organism reaches its end. This idea of returning to the origin, or that death as a destination is at the same time the beginning, is undoubtedly a legacy of the thinking that predominated in modernity, called energeticism.

It is clear that in order to talk about death, one must name its opposite, which is life, and even play with and define death as the end of life, or life as the path to death. Or say that one is only living death. That life is a process of dying.

Given that, in living beings, a form of death is occurring all the time, which is cell division, death is a path that begins at birth, as Bello says: 'the biological death of organisms does not occur strictly at a given moment, it is a process that begins with birth and ends, as far as men and women of science have agreed, with what is called "neurological death" or "brain death"' [Bello 2003, p. 20]

Death affects no one more deeply than human beings, for animals do not wonder about it, do not question it, do not try to avoid it in the same way that humans do, nor do they desire it as some humans do.

Human beings are defined as such because they know of their existence, but above all of their end. Savater says that it is not intellect, will or language that distinguishes human beings, but rather that certainty of death.

Schopenhauer [1999, p. 32] puts it this way: 'It is the capacity for knowledge that makes human life richer in suffering than that of animals,' since, although humans are capable of seeking pleasure, their suffering is greater because they know what the end is, while animals simply react to pain or pleasure without knowing the consequences.

Faced with this certainty, human beings act in different ways. Social ties themselves are a way of counteracting it, for it is through them that history is generated, that there are memories, that there is a kind of immortality. Power is nothing more than the search for eternity. Conquering so that one civilisation prevails, even if it is to the detriment of another; causing the death of another to avoid one's own.

Thus, death, which is the experience of every human being, as well as every sentient or living being, is at the same time particular or singular. What do we mean by this? That each person experiences their own death; it is not shared, it is the most personal thing, but at the same time it is untransmittable. It is an experience that cannot be recorded. We have an idea of death through the deaths of others, but we suffer the death of another and can imagine our own, yet we do not know what it is until it happens to us. We even know that the fear of death is not something recent; it appeared in modern times, in this fear of contagion.

We could think of it in terms of the existence of cemeteries, where the dead were separated from the living, where they were placed in the ground, three metres deep, with gravestones on top, with the justification of hygiene [very true] but more as a fear of contagion. That is why the success of films on this subject, zombies, is not so strange. Thinking about one's own death, although it is a contradiction in terms because how can one think about something one has not experienced? So it is more accurate to say that fantasising about one's own death is common; it does not happen to some people, to the depressed, to the crazy, to weird people, it happens to all of us, it is possible. Some fantasise about it more clearly than others; they do not go through the area of thought and fantasy, but rather that of action or performance. Others use jokes and black humour, which not everyone can handle, but for those who use it, it is precisely the tool they have available to talk about the subject.

'What would happen if I died?' some patients say, and they answer themselves: "Nothing, life goes on for everyone else. Who will suffer my death?" And they make a list, saying who will and who won't. 'What will it mean for the world if I cease to exist?' We think that over time we become irrelevant, perhaps that is so, perhaps we leave a mark, another one, another failure, another loss. It is common.

## Masochism vs Sadism

In his text *Drives and Drive Destinies*, Freud uses the sexual sadomasochistic pair to explain that the sadist's drive, when directed towards himself, becomes masochistic, and vice versa, placing sadism as primary, although in other texts, such as *The Economic Problem of Masochism* and *They Beat a Child*, he will say that masochism comes first.

Let us see why he changed his opinion or direction, whether it has to do with the fact that, with the passage of time, he gained greater clarity on the subject, or whether he may be referring to different situations.

In essence, for Freud, sadomasochism is about guilt. If sadism were primary, it would be explained by the aggression directed at the person who stands between the subject and satisfaction, and then, because the person who stands in the way is the father, in the case of the Oedipal triangle, guilt would arise for those parricidal and incestuous desires, so that now self-punishment would be sought, with the ego masochistically submitting itself having introjected the Oedipal conflict, resulting in the formation of the superego. 'In all cases, it is the consciousness of guilt that transmutes sadism into masochism' [Freud, 1919/1999, p. 186]

The child's fantasy of being beaten reveals his masochistic component. Freud, when speaking of this sadomasochistic pair, says that in the form of fantasy there will be a sadistic component, while in experience or satisfaction it will be masochistic. Only those who have experienced pain can think of inflicting it on others.

This means that the same subject has this reversal of the drive; he is not talking about a correspondence between people. As he illustrates with the case of Dostoevsky: 'in small things he was sadistic towards others; in larger things, sadistic towards himself, and therefore masochistic' [Freud, 1928/1999, p. 177]. Thus, he says that once his self-punishment was satisfied, the writer was able to create his works.

This is in line with what Deleuze says about the masochist, specifically the masochistic person—not so much the sadomasochistic relationship between the superego and the ego—that punishment is a condition for access to pleasure.

In other words, the masochist knows he is guilty and seeks his punishment, which may be through physical or verbal aggression, humiliation, or simply a long wait, and then they can take the next step towards pleasure: ‘the masochist expects pleasure as something essentially delayed and foresees pain as a condition that makes it possible, finally [physically and morally], for pleasure to arrive’ [Deleuze, 2001, p. 38].

The guilt they assume is that of compromising the law of incest, of committing incest and accessing the mother, in a way of accepting castration in advance, the punishment for the drive, and thus having the right to pleasure.

It is a kind of prior obedience in order to disobey, as he receives punishment before breaking the law. It is to experience castration or fault first, in order to then be able to allow oneself incestuous pleasure.

That is why, for Deleuze, the masochist is truly the perverse one, as he is the one who denies the law: ‘the magnifying denial of the mother [‹‹no, the mother is not symbolically lacking anything››] corresponds to an annulling denial of the father [‹‹The father is nothing››, that is, he is deprived of any symbolic function]’ [Deleuze, 2001, p. 33]

What the masochist punishes in himself is the father with whom he has identified, the father who has been left out, since the mother—in her three versions—is the one who is present: the primitive or uterine mother, the Oedipal or lover mother, and the oral or deadly mother.

The masochist, placing himself in a waiting period, with a reflective middle voice, makes the other the subject, so that he can become the object, be ‘stuck’; ‘the masochistic subject is embodied as a possessed object’ [Assoun, 2005, p. 78].

On the part of the sadist, he institutionalises himself, places himself on the side of the law, identifies with the law, thus identifying with the father who marks the castration of the other, always demonstrating what he can do beyond the law. Here there is denial, but of the mother. This identification with the law is none other than with the superego.

The sadist is pure superego, therefore desexualised and formed of pure death drive because he has taken the place of the criminal, of the one who points to the law through his transgression, his exception.

It is said that one of the conflicts of the subject is between the demands of the superego and the need to preserve the ego. In the sadist, there is no such tension, as he identifies with that superego, but directs his aggression outwards, towards the other, as he has no reason to punish himself or his ego when he has been allowed everything.

The truth is that both sadism and masochism are, each in a different way, outside the law. The sadist maintains that will or law of non-castration and the masochist assumes castration in order to then show that it does not exist.

Of course, in Deleuze, sadomasochism is seen from the impossibility of their correspondence, clearly, in a matter of people. We must not forget that Freud speaks of three types of masochism: the perverse [erogenous], the feminine and the moral. The perverse is the most easily seen, the feminine was described as fundamental, and the moral is what underlies every subject.

Moral masochism would be that of self-sabotage, detached from a loved object [subject]; it displaces it to a destination, to a reality that attacks it. Does this masochist who suffers the misfortune of life not seem to be in the hands of the superego, if Oedipal resexualisation intervenes?

So far, it is clear how sadism continues to represent the death drive. And masochism, for its part, could it have to do with that death drive directed at the ego, perhaps mixed with the sexual drive? ‘Masochism is a way of preserving destructiveness within and linking it to erotic drives’ [p. 96], asserts Assoun [2005].

On the other hand, to delve a little deeper and see the relationship between masochism and suicide, let us turn to another text, *Mourning and Melancholia*, which aims to highlight the difference between the two issues, the most obvious being that mourning is a conscious loss of an object, while melancholia also involves a loss, but it is unconscious because it is not known what has been lost.

Although they are similar in their trajectory or work, which in mourning is external and in melancholy is internal, another essential difference is the weakening and debasement of the ego. ‘The picture of this delusion of insignificance – predominantly moral – is completed by insomnia, rejection of food and a psychologically astonishing weakening of the drive that compels all living beings to cling to life’ [Freud, 1917/1998, p. 244]. This moral displeasure he mentions is reiterated or recalled by that instance, which until then was called the ‘moral conscience,’ that is, the superego.

He adds that instead of remaining silent and ashamed of their worthlessness, they display it as if, instead of talking about themselves, they were talking about someone else, which leads Freud to think that an identification was made with that object of love that was lost outside, hence his oft-repeated phrase: ‘The shadow of the object fell upon the ego, which, from then on, could be judged by a particular instance as an object, as the abandoned object’ [Freud, 1917/1998, p. 246]; thus, the object of punishment and superegoic reproaches is the ego, and the choice of object that had previously been made towards the outside, rested on narcissistic bases, so that when the libido was withdrawn from the external object, it was immediately directed towards the ego, thus avoiding hostility towards the other. Therefore, there will also be ambivalence in this link with the ego, that is, love and the need to survive and hatred transferred to self-reproach and punishment; in other words, wanting to get rid of that object that causes harm, but also to preserve it, because it is loved. From this, Freud speaks of regression to sadism and comments: ‘Only this sadism reveals to us the enigma of the inclination to suicide, which makes melancholia so interesting and... dangerous’ [Freud, 1917/1998, p. 249].

Thus, from this perspective, Freud argues that suicide is nothing more than killing another within the same subject, that is, the one with whom they identified.

However, this statement somewhat contradicts what he said about narcissistic choice, since a love object has been chosen as a result of identification, that is, of similarity, and therefore, in wanting to kill that external other, it is ultimately oneself that one wishes to kill.

It is somewhat confusing, but perhaps it can be resolved if we remember that Freud suggests that there are two types of object choice: support [based on the satisfaction of needs] and narcissistic, although he ends up saying that they are basically the same, because if an object is chosen, it is in order to survive, that is, to be cared for, protected, fed, and have basic needs satisfied, and that is to focus interest on oneself, which is called primary narcissism.

Thus, the chosen object results in identification with it. It is an object that satisfies. That introjection is of the traits that suit the ego, which builds it up for convenience. In this first process, there is not so much differentiation between the ego and the non-ego. This comes later.

What is clear from the text of *Mourning and Melancholia* is that the conflict of the melancholic is between the ego and the superego or “critical instance”, as he calls it, an idea that had already appeared in his early writing in 1901, where he talks about “a tendency towards self-punishment that is constantly lurking” [Freud, 1901, p. 176], also mentioning the link between this as yet unidentified instance and the death drive, which is not yet called that either.

In that paper, Freud discusses conscious suicides as a direct result of this need for self-punishment, as can be read in this excerpt from Kurt Cobain's diary: "I walked down to the train tracks, lay down and waited for the eleven o'clock train to pass, placing a couple of cement blocks on my chest and legs, and the train approached... And instead of running over me, it continued on the track next to me" [Cobain, 2006, p. 32]. Is this not a superego punishment? Having every intention of dying, suffering in the moment before making the decision and, in the end, when he thinks he has succeeded, due to an oversight in not checking the details, he is saved, reiterating his uselessness or lack of effectiveness.

But Freud also talks about another type of suicide, the unconscious or ‘unconsciously tolerated’ ones, or unconscious attempts at suicide, such as those in which the subject has not expressed a desire to die, but whose behaviour leads them to suffer ‘accidents’ that, due to their previous history, seem to be intentional acts of self-punishment.

Freud also points out a characteristic of such self-punishing accidents: '[...] intended, on the one hand, to atone for their misdeeds, but, on the other, to avoid an unknown, perhaps much greater punishment, which had caused them continuous anxiety for months'. [Freud, 1901/1999, p. 181] In other words, these punishments, which could be described as superegoic, are at the same time a defence against a greater punishment. The strongest punishment one can suffer is annihilation. So, is suicide a superegoic punishment or not?

Looking at the suicide of Sylvia Plath, for example, who had already attempted it several times, she had expressed in her poetry the sadness that overwhelmed her, that meaninglessness that, despite having children, was not compensated for. However, her intention to die was not so profound, as she tried to leave instructions to be saved in time, which did not happen in her last attempt, which was more of an achievement.

Could this be seen as the product of a superego sadism from which Silvia was ultimately able to free herself after the lack of timely help from her peers? Or, as described in Fernando Lobo's short novel[1], in which the main character has devoted himself to trying all kinds of ways to commit suicide, but does not succeed until he is 'deserving' and does so in the least planned way.

As Pereña says: 'Melancholy leads to suicide, and this usually happens when it is not accompanied by narcissistic seclusion in which the ego becomes the actor and stage of that endless and boring sadomasochistic performance that Freud summarises in the expression "sadistic guilt" or "shamelessness"' [Pereña, 2001, p. 143], which emphasises that melancholy can lead to suicide, yes, as long as the sadism uttered by the superego, who is the internal sadist, no longer works.

Or, as has commonly been seen, it is in the opposite state that suicide can appear, in mania; as that moment when there are no longer any barriers to the act, because everything is acting, without any symptoms, repression or words to stop it; 'that supposed libidinal energy that is not spent in the repressive process, that is not caught up in the social bond or encrypted in the unconscious, is simply death energy that is lost as an unstoppable "haemorrhage".' [Pereña, 2001, p. 134]

Given all this, suicide cannot be described as a superego punishment; on the contrary, it would be an affront to it. Knowing the nature of the superego, which is invaded by pure death drive and is sadistic, it is then primarily interested in ensuring that its object [according to Freud, it is the ego that becomes the object for the superego] does not disappear or is annihilated, as this would leave it unsatisfied.

The superego does not annihilate the object, but wants it to remain there so that it can continue to punish it. Another reason why suicide or the annihilation of the object is not a matter of superego punishment or commanded by it. 'Sadism that does not imply annihilation, because it would no longer have an object to direct itself towards. And which, on the other hand, recalls the compulsion to repeat the drive.' [Ortega Martínez, 2014, p. 96]

What does the superego punish? Or what does it consider an affront? Without a doubt, committing, intending to commit, or avoiding committing incest or parricide. 'Because of the taboo, every subject will be the bearer of a fear without cause, which is not only fear of the forbidden but, fundamentally, fear of finding the opportunity to commit the transgression.' [Gerber, in Morales and Gerber [comp.], 1998, p. 36] Avoidance is also punished, since it implies desire or intention, and it has already been said that for the unconscious there is no difference between what is fantasised and what is acted upon. Naturally, replacing the incestuous or parricidal object with another that is less culpable does not exempt one from the same.

Leclaire, on narcissism, says that it is formed at that moment in the mirror when what is reflected is nothing other than the representation of maternal desire, that perfect image, that perfect *infans* loved by the mother [or by both parents] and which the subject must then abandon or kill in order to make way for lack, for castration.

That is why the first death is that of the perfect image. That representation of maternal desire that is the phallus. Thus, this first death leaves its mark, like the tombstone of the dead, of the phallus, of that maternal desire.

For Leclaire, the suicidal person cannot come to terms with this mourning, suffering so much that they prefer annihilation. ‘...the logic of suicide derives from a perfect syllogism: in order to live, I must kill myself; but I do not feel that I am really living [this is not life!], so I commit suicide’ [Leclaire, 1999, p. 13].

Perhaps, then, they are unable to make this separation from maternal desire and offer, in response to the question ‘What does the Other want from me?’, disappearance, in a kind of sacrifice, as can be seen in the writings of the Argentine poet in her diary a year before her suicide:

"Today everyone has betrayed me.  
The delirious dialogue with my mother.

It is a very heavy, terrible, frightening burden that will cause me to lose my life in the cruelest way. She now knows about the failure of her entire life. How can I compensate her? How can I help her? [...]

This is my mother, the one who made my childhood a labyrinth of nameless sadness. And she and I are so defeated that both the culprit and the victim have disappeared. I love her very much, but bearing her life [on my shoulders, which ache so much] means sacrificing myself. And of course I sacrifice myself. Of course I offer myself up as a burnt offering. So what?" [Pizarnik, 2005, p. 493].

When Lacan argues that the object – as the cause of desire – is the source of anxiety, it is precisely because if one were to stand before the object and take it, one would cease to be desiring, and therefore achieve completeness. This undoubtedly means the annihilation of the subject, that is, death. ‘...in the two opposite situations of being intensely in love and wanting to commit suicide, the ego is overwhelmed by the object; but in each case in a very different way’ [Freud cited in Álvarez, 1999, p. 164]. If the ego presents itself as the object of the suicidal person, it is the body, that which is external to the ego, that must also be annihilated.

One can succumb to the superego and punish and mistreat oneself as in the deepest melancholy, but that does not guarantee death. Probably only in attempts, those that fail, for we must not forget that the superego is sadistic, distressing and cruel but not deadly. Anxiety is the warning sign.

Of course, the closer one gets to fulfilling this task of suicide, the more distress one will experience, as it involves warnings or signals that one wants to transgress the law, that one wants to move from the place of “not-all” to “all”.

One does not kill the other within the subject, one kills the subject's ego. As Freud said in *Melancholia*, for whom the object choice is narcissistic in nature, the one who is killed is the very ego that represents that other abandoning person. It is true that this ego was shaped by the other, but in any case, one kills everyone, everything.

Perhaps that is why messages are left or suicide itself is already a message addressed to others. In reality, when the ego kills itself, what remains is the Other, the complete Other, the Other who no longer desires, but that Other who is like the Master, who without his slave will also cease to exist. Thus, neither the subject nor the Other remains.

Perhaps we continue to ask ourselves, as Freud did: "How is it possible to overcome the drive to live, which is so extraordinarily intense? if it can only happen with the help of the disillusioned libido, or if there is a renunciation of the ego's affirmation for strictly egoistic reasons" [Freud, 1910/1998, p. 232]

And then, to conclude that it is masochism that leads the subject to suicide, perhaps simplifies, from a theoretical point of view, phenomena that belong to the singular, to the everyday, to particular and at the same time shared history. Is what happens in masochism still a problem of libidinal economy? In suicide?

### Defence mechanism

Freud writes the following in the text ‘Denial’: ‘We understand it: it is the rejection, by projection, of a thought that has just surfaced’ [1925/1998, p. 253].

This sentence appears in the first paragraph without any introduction, unlike his usual style of writing. He gets straight to the point of what he wants to convey about what happens in the clinic. The subject is not new to him; he has been thinking about it for many years, although he had not dedicated a specific text to the subject, nor did he do so for other so-called defence mechanisms.

Returning to the quoted phrase, it seems simple, but it implies several elements:

Rejection. Based on the word “no”.

Through projection.

From an occurrence that has just surfaced.

The first is easy to detect, as it is the aforementioned ‘no’. The second point, which refers to projection – another defence mechanism – implies that there is another person present in the situation. Another person onto whom one's own desire, one's own intention, is projected. It is the idea that the other person assumes or thinks something and then the first subject says, ‘it is not what you think’ or interpret.

We know that with regard to projection, as discussed in Schreber's text and others, it comes from a transformation of affections, in their immediate reversal [although they are not a true opposition]

I [he] love him [another him], an irreconcilable situation because it implies a homosexual affection, so it is transformed into:

I [he] hate him [another him], which is also irreconcilable because it is a feeling felt or thought of as something negative. So now the subject is transformed by the object, changing places.

He [another he] hates me. This is more acceptable and is what produces paranoid ideas.

Incidentally, these transformations are the basis of almost all delusions, not only paranoid ones, but also jealous, erotomaniacal ones, etc.

Freud makes it clear that in paranoia there is a basic element of homoeroticism that cannot be accepted and that in order to defend oneself from that libido, one must transform oneself as we have seen.

That is the function of psychic defence, of defence mechanisms, to seek balance in the psychic apparatus so that whatever generates the most tension or excitement can be reduced. [pleasure principle]

Returning to the text of the denial, in the second point of the sentence: ‘by projection’, although it refers us to what has been mentioned, it is only in the sense that there is another person listening to a story, in the clinic, in a specific situation, and who apparently already has an interpretation, a thought, an intention or a desire.

Where does that intention, desire, interpretation or thought come from? Obviously from the one who tells the story, not from the one who listens, but the latter has attributed his own desire to the other:

I am talking about this. It is irreconcilable for the subject.

You are the one who may think that I am talking about this. This is where the listener intervenes, but now in an active role given to him by the first speaker, the analysand.

It becomes: I am not talking about this, you thought it, but it is not so, or I did not say it.

And the third point in Freud's sentence is about an occurrence that has just surfaced, that is, an association, the unconscious that emerges, where the subject of the unconscious appeared, precisely.

This phenomenon appears so frequently and in so many forms that it really has clinical relevance. Sometimes it appears as a kind of joke, ‘as I said, it seems that I meant to say such and such... but I didn't,’ accompanied by laughter. ‘Don't go thinking that it was this’... However, we could think of it not only in the way Freud presented it in the text and in relation to suicide and those phrases that come out like this: ‘I don't want to live anymore!’ said in a tone of weariness, exhaustion, suffering, sometimes after narrating at length some serious or delicate situation, or after several sessions. Sometimes it is the phrase that opens the session or marks the beginning of the analysis.

To this complaint, which, I always add, at least in my reflection, I do not usually say in sessions, unless I hear it as appropriate, the word ‘like this’, that is: ‘I don't want to live like this’ and that gives rise to work, then how one wants to live. But the phrase “I don't want to live” can also lead us to ask, “What about desire?”. If we take this phrase as an occurrence that arose in the session and apply the same elements mentioned at the beginning of this text:

There is rejection.

By projection.

From an occurrence that has just surfaced.

The phrase begins with the rejection of a desire, in this case the desire to live. Because desire only enters in the condition of being denied. In the second element, it clearly could not be about the listener in analysis, as if the other wanted it.

What does the analyst or the listener want when faced with this phrase? That the analysand lives?

It will be, as we failed to mention in those elements when the desire is placed on the listener by projection, that the listener does so in the place of transference, therefore, it is not the person of the analyst on whom the desire or intention was projected. It will then be of the one, or rather, of the one who could desire, in this case, that someone lives or that there is life.

I specify that it is the one who has that function, because the one who desires is none other than the mother.

When we talk about desire, the desire of the mother, which is replaced by the name of the father, well, this issue is being indicated, the mother is responsible for desire, that is her function.

Lacan tells us that there is no such thing as non-desire, as we are incomplete beings, we desire, and if we are alive it is because we were desired. The question that is answered in analysis is, what is that desire for, where does it go?

In fact, the one who knows [not that she knows it] about desire is the mother. It is not so strange that it is a woman who performs the maternal function. This leads us to another text from the same year as Denial, entitled 'Some Psychic Consequences of the Anatomical Difference of the Sexes,' in which he addresses the deeply rooted relationship between women and lack, precisely because of the primacy of the phallus.

This situation frames her Oedipus complex, the difficulty of escaping it, insofar as what is considered a punishment for the male is a premise for the female: castration. Thus, upon entering the Oedipus complex, the path becomes difficult to change objects, to break the strong bond with the first object and seek compensation from the son, as Freud narrates.

Even when the girl can make use of denial [an affirmation accompanied by negation: 'yes, but...'] 'I don't have a phallus, but it will grow,' it does not work forever. Having gone through this experience of incompleteness on more than one occasion, also with physical evidence, she cannot position herself in the place of the whole, of the phallus, and remains in the not-all.

I mention this text because it seems to follow the same logic of denial, although it apparently talks about different things. But in that "not-all", in that incompleteness, one of the ways out is to desire a child, only the reason for it is missing, which is then rebuked behind that phrase "I don't want to live", even though there was already a mother who wanted her to live.

By naming something, it is given existence, even when it is put in the negative. Removing a number, for example, as in "there is no one", or putting it in the negative "-1", is giving it a place. If it were to be eliminated, it would be placed at zero, but zero is not totally empty either, because it depends on where it is placed to give it meaning or not. If it is anticipated, it gives way to 1, and if it is placed after, it increases it.

This is how what seems empty, missing, is rather what promotes existence. In such a way that when something is denied, in whatever way one wants to approach it, it is manifesting an existence, an appearance, a saying.

So, with regard to the desire not to live, when we hear the phrase 'I don't want to live' or 'I want to die' [even though it no longer appears in the negative], both of which speak of wanting or desire, we will take them as the same for the purposes of this exercise. It has to do with wanting death, but death is unknown to us. We have references to it, through the death of others, but not our own; we have not gone through that experience, so how could we want something we have not experienced?

As philosophers say, nothingness is unthinkable, death is in that reference of nothingness, of being unthinkable, just as zero is in non-existence, but depending on where it is placed, death is unthinkable, yet it precedes us and will be the place we arrive at.

Wanting to return to the experience of satisfaction, repetition, is a theme that guides part of Freud's theory, that is, wanting what has been lost, what has been experienced, and that is not the case with death.

So, when we hear the phrase 'I don't want to live', we have to ask ourselves what is being denied, what desire, whose desire, but not only that, but as Freud suggests in that denial, if one wants to live, we have to question the hows.

Thus, as we work with this phrase, 'I don't want to live,' it shows us the opposite, that the person wants to live, but not in the way they are living or not for what they believe they want to live for. There is always another present in that statement, because the word is always moving through the dialogue, but not only because of that, but also because it undoubtedly has some dedication.

In any case, we must continue listening in order to find out what it is like to want to live, and that means facing one's own desire, although sometimes we must also recognise that if there is no dignified way to live, it is also a good choice to die with dignity.

### **Suicidal people and suicide. Is prevention possible?**

Suicide is therefore not so strange or surprising, because, as already pointed out, there is a tendency to return to the beginning, but this would not be what is sought in the first instance, although when talking about the beginning, there is an idea of thinking of it as the womb, and it is not surprising, then, that it is associated with the mother and death, as a metaphor for the beginning and the end found at the same point. It could be said that it is not only a question of the death drive that is at stake in suicide; it is not a search for death for death's sake, but rather a desire for something other than this life. "I believe that no man has ever given up on life when it was worth preserving. For so great is our natural horror of death that petty motives will never be able to reconcile us to it" [2002, p. 188], as Hume puts it.

Camus, for his part, puts it this way: 'To kill oneself, in a sense, and as in melodrama, is to confess. It is to confess that one has been overwhelmed by life or that one does not understand it.' [Camus, 2005, p. 17] It is an act that has justification and that comes from the rationality of man. It is to confess failure, like divorce. Or the *Échec*, as Améry puts it.

And it seems more logical to him that someone can decide about their own life and kill themselves than someone who lives knowing that they will die but leaving the decision to something else, as if they were condemned to death. Thus, the suicidal person is a rebel or someone who opposes the universal order, so to speak. One could even say that they are someone who denies the inevitable. In this regard, Camus says: 'It is a matter of dying unreconciled and not willingly.

Suicide is a denial' [Camus, 2005, p. 69], one might add, of that order established by life in which one is certain to die, but in which one cannot decide either the manner or the moment. A denial of the obligation to live.

"Even before being asked, those who seek voluntary death cry out: No! Or he says, in a hoarse voice: perhaps it is necessary, but I do not want to, I will not bow to a duty that is imposed on me distressingly from outside as the law of society and from within as *lex naturae*, a law that, however, I no longer want to recognise" [Camus, 2005, 173].

Suicide has been prohibited, it has been deemed a sin, because it is also an act of disconnection from the other, whoever that may be, the father or God. It is, in other words, the sin of separation, of abandonment. It is therefore a deliberate and not accidental action, with the possible variations of anorexia, resistance or interruption of medical treatment.

Today, however, it is not a judge who decides how bad a suicide attempt is, but a doctor who does so and who offers a solution to the mentally "depressed". Szasz puts it this way:

'Confining a depressed person to prevent them from committing suicide, prescribing a lethal drug to a terminal patient [...] are legal medical interventions, but they are by no means medical treatments because the symptoms they treat are not characteristic of any disease' [Szasz, 2002, p. 142]

He says this because his job is to compare and find the differences between what is now called ‘assisted suicide’ – euthanasia – and suicide.

This is, apparently, an attempt by the law to recognise the right to die. But the distinction is clear: while ‘assisted suicide’ is a physical problem, resulting from prolonged illness, severe physical symptoms, terminal illness, the issue of suicide is not physical. Furthermore, it is different to give someone else permission to kill than to kill oneself.

Assisted death, rather, would in any case be giving another person permission to commit murder. Whether due to physical impossibility or the underlying motive, it is murder or, rather, a shared act, whereas suicide is a solitary act.

Now, talking about the right to die as a right is likely to require another discussion.

Judges have ceded their power [to punish or remedy] to doctors and psychiatrists, and this is an effect of death becoming a public event. It lost its privacy when the hospital, rather than the home, became the place to die.

Thus, medicine has control over death. The ultimate goal of medicine is supposed to be to alleviate pain, which is used as a subterfuge for assisted death, even though it is not known for certain who should die or not; this is determined by the doctor, not the person suffering the pain.

On the other hand, the Hippocratic Oath clearly prohibits murder. But as Freud pointed out, what is not desired or has not been done is not prohibited.

"The authorities – priests, politicians, doctors – have always wielded the power to kill and have not hesitated to use this power in their own interests. What horrifies the authorities is that people can take their own lives, since they recognise [correctly] in this action an individual rebellion against authority and an affirmation of personal autonomy" [Jankélévitch, 2004, p. 173]

So, the opposite, that is, legalising suicide, would be to place the decision on death in the hands of the state or the doctor, as they would be the ones to determine who can commit suicide and who cannot.

As has happened with other social minorities – or would it be more appropriate to call them objects of racism? – their rights have been recognised by the state after intense struggles: indigenous peoples, black people, women, homosexuals, etc. As a result, their lives, rights, obligations and behaviour in the world are now regulated. Whether or not it is an advantage is that suicide remains the great exception.

At least it is a disadvantage in terms of being understood, tolerated and allowed to do what they want; but it is an advantage in that the decision to die remains somewhat private. ‘...all the more so because one day, which will surely come, we will no longer *have to live*, but *will be able to not live*’ [Améry, 1999, p. 68].

And this discussion about whether the doctor decides who dies or the state allows suicide is irrelevant when we can distinguish between those who manage to kill themselves – *suicidants*– and those who only attempt to do so –*suicidaries*–. [2] The problem with medicine, psychiatry, and anyone who insists on ‘saving’ them is precisely for the latter, unless their suicidal tendencies are exposed.

Meanwhile, those who can reveal the reality of what suicide means are the suicidal individuals themselves. Although it may be paradoxical, their testimony cannot be relied upon.

Explaining why someone commits suicide can take years of study, interviews, etc. It is definitely a blind task. What can be done is to assume or speculate that the development or causes have multiple variants. And in common? It could perhaps be said that it is always a decision. That it is an action for the future, a kind of anticipation, an “existential safety net”[3]? But it is an anticipation of something that, in itself, is unknown or impossible to recreate, making it something clearer than death. It is turning your back on life, but also on its logic.

Thus, all voluntary death is an individual, personal decision that nevertheless has a social impact, not in terms of the group as its cause, but in terms of going against it. Sociologists, religion, and many schools of thought assert that it is a social act and that it even affects society. Perhaps it is at the point where it questions it, or rather confronts it with not being in it.

Although one could say that the person who commits suicide is the one who knows about death, this would also be a mistake, since one cannot know who is no longer there. Death, moreover, is a negation in itself. One can know about the act. About living and dying. About the affirmation of being, even if it is in the past. Not about being, but about what I was or am, which is closer to being than to existing, strictly speaking.

Durkheim is the sociologist who attempted to provide an explanation through statistics to give a scientific meaning to the causes of suicide, to separate it from mental illness and the connotation of crime. In his review of previous research, he concludes that suicide is a social fact, not a personal one, but a product of customs, cities, social movements and thus, it is therefore possible to analyse and predict it. Just as science requires. In such a way that suicide as a social fact is a message that the group to which one belongs is not entirely well.

This does not mean that, based on Durkheim's explanations and the demonstration of the phenomenon as a product or symptom of society, it has been possible to prevent it. On the contrary, it is known to be one of the behaviours that is least avoided by campaigns that attempt to do so, and it even seems that these campaigns have the effect of encouraging it.

Without devaluing some attempts that apparently still today carry out important actions with regard to suicide, such as those made by the group called 'the Samaritans'. From there on, it is a matter of working to eliminate a symptom and not the problem, if it can be considered a problem at all. Especially when it is known to be a rational decision. And that those who want to commit suicide will do so with, without or in spite of others.

Psychology, for its part, does not shy away from trying to scientifically explain all aspects of human behaviour. However, there are those who have reduced suicide to a problem of self-esteem or wounded self-esteem. With this, treatment would possibly be successful. The issue is that, apparently, most disorders revolve around low self-esteem or compensation for it.

The truth is that what leads to voluntary death is complex and surely different in each individual.

It has already been said that it is a different kind of logic, more similar, says Alvarez, to that of a nightmare. Or, in any case, an awakening from a nightmare that one can no longer bear to continue dreaming. And in an attempt to find commonalities, he says that suicide becomes an obsession, not so much the result, but the means, 'just as the fetishist enjoys his rituals more than the orgasm they provide' [Álvarez, 1999, p. 165].

And it is not surprising that the way in which one has decided to die is unchangeable.

For Jean Améry, '*éche*c, however, exists as a latent threat at the heart of all existence and in a more evident way than death' [Améry, 1999, p. 51], that is, it is not so much the tendency towards death itself that leads to it, but what precedes it, that feeling of failure or listlessness, which also shapes the obsession with the means. That is why one should not think that those who wish to commit suicide are free from fear.

This perfectionism in form can even lead them to simply think about the act all the time, without actually committing it. As already mentioned, those who do so slowly or chronically, such as anorexics, alcoholics or drug addicts, could also be considered. And there are those who seek death without knowing it, through risky behaviour.

It seems that suicide is a way of escaping or appeasing oneself that exists in addition to madness. A kind of search for freedom. To commit suicide is to end one's own self, but also what is outside of it, that is, the body.

If it were the product of an impulse, as part of being human, one would simply have to let oneself go, but it is a choice because one is against something stronger than that impulse.

## Conclusions

The issue of suicide has not ceased to be important to reflect on and find ways to address, especially in this era in which the number of suicides has skyrocketed, and in which personal crises are no longer the only cause, but also social and health problems, such as going through a pandemic. All the anxiety it caused pushed hundreds of people to their limits, including those responsible for treating this illness. We also find cases of doctors committing suicide.

We continue to think of suicide as a failure of social bonds, of the lack of support given to the individual, which is why the subject frightens us, moves us and challenges us. What are we not realising? Or what are we avoiding when we listen to others? Why does it frighten us when suicidal ideation is mentioned?

According to psychoanalytic listening, the aim is to find the difference in repetition, so it would be necessary to listen as many times as necessary for the unsaid to ‘fall into place’. The truth is that if someone says it over and over again, at least they are saying it over and over again, that is, they are keeping it in discourse and not in action, and most likely desperately seeking to make sense of everything, as Victor Frankl would say, trying to find meaning in life.

When we hear news that someone has committed suicide, the impact is inevitable. Whether or not they are close, known, familiar or a stranger, the impact is such that it seems that, if they were close, something affects us, something about it moves us.

There is no way to remain unmoved. The most frustrating thing for some is that in the social or academic circles of the person who committed suicide, there is sometimes an attempt not to talk about the matter, to establish silence as a way of erasing the fact.

But what happens when we try to erase a trace? Sometimes it leaves an even deeper mark. It is believed that talking about the subject will cause some kind of contagion, or that we cannot face the fact that someone has decided to do what we might want to do ourselves.

As we said at the beginning of this text, when patients think that if they die there will be nothing left of them, they will be forgotten, as if there were a strong need to vanish. But at the same time, they do not realise that this very act would leave an indelible mark.

Committing suicide should perhaps also be a responsible and careful act, not only because of what one will cease to suffer, but also because of the impact it will have on others, on the community. We survivors are left with “resignation”... that is, to re-signify, to give new meaning, it is left to the rest of us to do so.

Statistics tell us that suicide occurs in certain populations, associated with certain pathologies, often depression, post-traumatic stress and some others, including addiction [young people between the ages of 12 and 17 have begun using illicit drugs]. ] That is why, in Mexico, the National Council for Suicide Prevention has been created.

In Switzerland, on the other hand, there is an organisation called Dignitas, whose motto is: *To live with dignity—to die with dignity.*

Different perspectives. In Mexico, the focus is on preventing suicide and continuing to uphold the obligation to live, while in other countries where assisted death has already been legalised, the talk is not only about the right to live, but also the right to die with dignity. Because when we talk about life with dignity in Mexico, our society, economy and situation in general are clearly precarious, which is perhaps why we talk about minimal issues, such as the minimum wage, as well as living by minimal obligation.

When associated with the phenomenon of depression, it is not so simple. Those who suffer from it know it, they live it, as José Woldenberg says in Kraus [2021]: it is a kind of brainstorm, a tempest, a storm in the brain, which does not always end in suicide. Suicidal ideation may indeed exist, but it is not the only thing; it is an endless stream of thoughts, fantasies, and ideas that accumulate and attack, which can disable the person to such an extent that there is no possibility of suicide.

However, the fact that statistics, governments, the church, the education system, etc., seek to talk about suicide and how to prevent it may not actually respond to such humanitarian interests as is believed.

So, let's take a real look at what is happening: those who decide to die want to stop suffering, to cease to be. Suicide is an act of disengagement from others. It is turning your back on life, but also on its logic, on the order of its discourse.

We can certainly think of suicide as a social fact, as Durkheim says, which has to do with the group surrounding the person in order for them to decide whether or not to kill themselves.

We can also talk about individual or personality characteristics, as some neurologists suppose, which can push a person to make such a decision. However, this is more complex to identify, as the existing literature is so general that these personality characteristics can produce anything.

Currently, there is a great influence from the mass media, where harmful dynamics can be manipulated by those who have access to technologies that, if not supervised or regulated, can have a significant impact on people. For example, some virtual groups communicate through chats or messages and incite others to commit acts that put the physical and psychological integrity of those within the group at risk.

Some of these groups take these acts to the level of pressuring someone to commit suicide in front of everyone, through a screen, where they cannot see what is behind it, but there are many who are watching. What are they watching? What is the desire now to not only die on one's own, but to be seen and to see the other die?

This phenomenon is important, as more and more young people are interacting through social media and their parents or other adults are not mediating their access to these devices, which results in very serious acts that put their lives at risk.

Suicide is increasingly worrying, firstly because of the number of acts that occur each year, which has been increasing, and secondly because of the age at which it has been occurring lately, which is getting lower. It is no longer a question of adolescents between the ages of 15 and 18 committing or expressing suicidal intentions, but rather of children exhibiting this behaviour.

Durkheim said that suicide is a social phenomenon, that is, it has to do with the group to which one belongs and the ways in which that group may or may not protect its members. So, of course, when addressing suicide, a complex issue in the sense that we cannot take a truly experimental and therefore explanatory approach, we are led down a path of endless speculation that raises questions without necessarily providing answers from those who committed suicide.

Others may wonder what institutions such as hospitals, clinics or those who receive warning calls about these phenomena do, but it remains to be seen what those who live with this on a daily basis do, not only families but also schools, which represent a second home, and above all to know that opinions or attitudes that are sometimes not expressed but acted upon may be serving as protective or producing the opposite effect.

Returning to the ideas of psychoanalysis, on the life and death drives, this tendency to return to the origin, psychic sadomasochism, and the idea of the conflict between the superego and the ego, we could say that one can succumb to the superego and punish and mistreat oneself as in the deepest melancholy, but that does not guarantee death. Probably only in attempts, those that fail, for we must not forget that the superego is sadistic, distressing and cruel, but not deadly. Anxiety is the warning sign.

Of course, the closer one gets to fulfilling this task of suicide, the more distress one will experience, as it involves warnings or signals that one wants to transgress the law, that one wants to move from the place of 'not-all' to 'all'.

Thus, suicide in such delicate stages as childhood, puberty, or adolescence, as classified by developmental psychology, where we can recognise 'normal psychopathology,' that is, moments of "natural" crisis or those typical of these stages, are part of this questioning of everything, of laws, of the Other, and even of the 'duty to live' as a mandate or obligation. Enrique Graue [in Kraus, 2021] says: 'they almost always make these lethal decisions because we have not been able to light the way for them, fill them with hope and generate enough self-esteem in them to overcome their crises'.

The truth is that, in the face of the pain of existence, what mitigates it? No matter how small the subjects who think about it or attempt it may be, many say that it is low tolerance for frustration and the immediacy of the search for satisfaction. What we can say is that no two suicides are the same; we cannot speak of 'suicide' but rather of suicides, and in trying to explain them and reason them out, something will always be missing. Regardless of age or cause, what we can say is that we need the gaze of Another, it sustains us, someone looks at us, contemplates us, we are desired.

It gives meaning to our lives. Otherwise, there would be no transference, no life, that gaze promises us that we are at the centre of charity, a benevolent gaze. With suicide, one manages to return to that gaze, to become a sacred being, a despicable yet fascinating remnant. The suicidal person seeks to restore that fallen benevolence. [Juan Ritvo in Kraus, 2021] The call to suicide in the enigma of suicide.

It is not an act, it is extreme action, scandalous in order to be looked at again, to be talked about, to be desired.

### Declarations

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. They have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the article reported in this article.

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### Author contribution

*Pérez-Castillo, Pablo*: Contributed to the development of the section on defence mechanisms.

*Nieves-Chávez, Mayra Araceli*: Contributed to the development of the conclusions.

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[2] Suicidal and suicidal are terms used by Jean Améry in **Raising a Hand Against Oneself. Discourse on Voluntary Death**. Pre-textos, Spain, 1999.

[3] Thomas Szasz.

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## Myths of romantic love and sexist violence in courtship. A gender-focused university extension exercise applied by students

### Mitos del amor romántico y violencia machista en el noviazgo. Un ejercicio de extensión universitaria con enfoque de género aplicado por estudiantes

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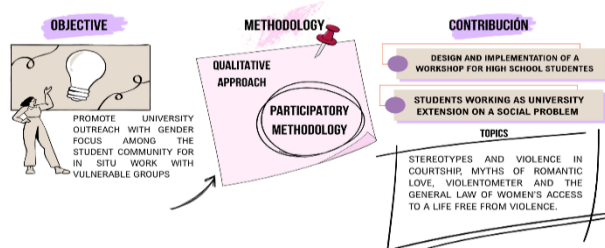
#### Abstract

The university extension work allows us from teaching, create spaces to bring our students to social problems that require their attention, such as sexist violence in courtship. In a country where violence against women, girls and adolescents is a constant, dismantling the myths of romantic love among young people is one way to eradicate gender-based violence. In 2019, the National System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents [SIPINNA] reported that 7 out of 10 teenagers had suffered violence in their dating relationship, therefore, we consider designing a workshop for high school students as a necessary university extension exercise

#### Resumen

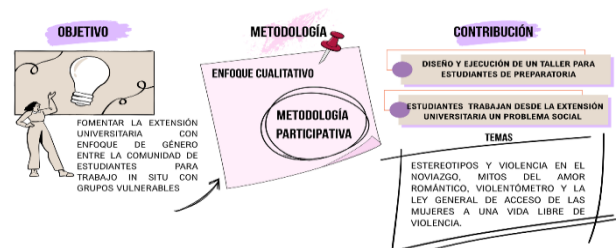
El trabajo de extensión universitaria nos permite desde la docencia, crear espacios para acercar a nuestros estudiantes a problemáticas sociales que requieren de su atención, como la violencia machista en el noviazgo. En un país en el que la violencia contra las mujeres, niñas y adolescentes es una constante, desmontar entre la juventud los mitos del amor romántico es uno de los caminos para erradicar la violencia de género. En 2019, el Sistema Nacional de Protección de Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes [SIPINNA] reportaba que 7 de cada 10 adolescentes habían sufrido violencia en su relación de noviazgo, por ello, consideramos diseñar un taller para estudiantes de preparatoria como un ejercicio de extensión universitaria necesario.

MYTHS OF ROMANTIC LOVE AND SEXIST VIOLENCE IN COURTSHIP.  
A GENDER-FOCUSED UNIVERSITY EXTENSION EXERCISE APPLIED BY STUDENTS.



**Feminism, Gender perspective, University extension, Violence Dating**

MITOS DEL AMOR ROMÁNTICO Y VIOLENCIA MACHISTA EN EL NOVIAZGO.  
UN EJERCICIO DE EXTENSIÓN UNIVERSITARIA CON ENFOQUE DE GÉNERO APLICADO POR ESTUDIANTES.



**Feminismo, Perspectiva de género, Extensión universitaria, Violencia en el noviazgo**

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Peer review under the responsibility of the Scientific Committee MARVID®- in the contribution to the scientific, technological and innovation Peer Review Process through the training of Human Resources for continuity in the Critical Analysis of International Research.



**Introduction**

One of the social problems we face today in schools is dating violence. Although this violence is not exclusive to women, they are the most affected because it feeds on historically unequal power and authority relationships between women and men, gender roles and stereotypes, and myths of romantic love.

In Mexico, figures on femicide, violent deaths, and intentional homicides show that, as a result of the hegemony of traditions, customs, social norms, machismo, and androcentric culture, it is women and adolescents who are murdered by their partners or ex-partners. This allows us to understand the danger and insecurity they face when they are unable to recognise attitudes, behaviours or signs of violence on the part of their partners in their romantic relationships.

Violence in dating relationships and the myths that romanticise romantic relationships must be disseminated among the population of upper secondary school students. It is at this stage that the first dating relationships begin [and sexual relations that can lead to acts of control take place for the first time], which can lead to physical, psychological and sexual violence between adolescent couples.

As university lecturers, we have the opportunity to create spaces for our community of students in training to work on these social problems that cause so much harm, while developing conceptual, procedural and attitudinal skills through outreach work. This article is the result of the workshop *Myths of Romantic Love and Violence in Dating Relationships*, which was given to 83 students at State Preparatory School No. 7, located in the municipality of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas.

The workshop was designed, organised and implemented by students from the Gender and Communication academic unit [January-June 2025 school year] of the morning shift of the Communication degree programme at the Autonomous University of Chiapas, under the supervision of the teacher who teaches the academic unit. The workshop was held on 12 and 13 May.

The purpose of this work is to recover the lived experience of the students who participated in the design and execution of the workshop. The dissemination of the results seeks to strengthen

the university's outreach, increase the number of students in social intervention projects, and determine whether it changes the perception of students who participate in the Teaching Outreach Units [UVD] programme.

The article explains the importance of university outreach in addressing issues in educational organisations, provides a brief overview of violence in the state of Chiapas, defines the myths of romantic love and their role in intimate partner violence, and then presents the experiences of the workshop participants.

Does participating in the design and execution of a workshop change the perception of students participating in a UVD regarding the topic being developed and what it means to organise this type of activity? This is the experience.

**University outreach, a space for professional practice for students at the Autonomous University of Chiapas [UNACH]**

One of the pillars of university work is outreach. It is through this mechanism that universities contribute to social change by implementing social intervention projects that directly benefit the community. University outreach allows the educational work carried out in the classroom to be strengthened by giving students the opportunity to apply what they have learned in class in real-life situations. University outreach also strengthens the relationship between society and the university.

The Autonomous University of Chiapas has a programme called Teaching Outreach Units [UVD] to promote outreach work. The aim is for full-time, part-time and subject-specific teaching staff to work together with groups of students to implement projects that address issues requiring specialised attention. Designing a UVD encourages critical thinking by bringing university students closer to social issues that need to be addressed.

All projects are registered on the institutional platform known as SUVID. Once the work proposal has been accepted by the University System of Teaching Linkage Units [SUVID], it must be executed within the time frame established by those who designed the project. Upon completion, an evaluation period begins by the Department of Outreach and Professional Practices of the Project and

Gutiérrez-Zenteno, Sheila Xoloxochitl, Marín-Levario, Carmen Guadalupe, Gálvez-Rendón, Marco Antonio and Enríquez-García, Roldán. [2025]. Myths of romantic love and sexist violence in courtship. A gender-focused university extension exercise applied by students. *Journal of Philosophy and Daily Life*. 11[27]1-14: e21127114. <https://doi.org/10.35429/JPDL.2025.11.27.2.1.14>

Programme Directorate, a survey is administered to the university students who participated, and the teacher responsible for the project submits a report and the corresponding evidence [SUVID, 2025].

As the institution explains on its website, the UVDs have made it possible to incorporate the development of professional skills and also encourage commitment and social responsibility in the student community by experiencing social problems that persist in the entity [SUVID, 2025, para. 2].

We began working on university extension projects in 2017 and 2018, developing television programmes for the local government channel [Gutiérrez Zenteno, Enríquez García and Gálvez Rendón, 2019]. However, the SARS Cov 2 health emergency forced us to work from home. In 2023 and 2024, UVDs resumed its work with the design of podcasts on social issues that were broadcast by *Diario Portavoz*. By 2025, a project designed for upper secondary school students had been developed.

### **Why design a workshop on the myths of romantic love and dating violence?**

The workshop was created as part of the Gender and Communication Academic Unit taught in the Communication degree programme at UNACH. Its objective is to analyse communication from a feminist ethical perspective in order to learn to identify gender perspective as a theoretical tool of feminism, which seeks to show the inequalities between men and women based on the sociocultural constructs that are reproduced in the mass media. One of the topics covered in class is gender roles and stereotypes and their role in the mandates of violence that the media reproduce through series, films, television programmes, songs, among others.

Our aim is not to censor media production, but to help students recognise the gender dynamics, mandates and technologies that trivialise the structural and systematic violence that leads to discrimination and violence against women.

Talking about violence in dating relationships is a must. In Mexico, 10 women a day are victims of femicide [Rea, Carrión and Salmerón, 2024].

Their killers were their partners or ex-partners, and in very few cases a family member, as reported by the United Nations [United Nations, 2024].

The Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System [2025] reported that among women aged 0 to 17, from January to May 2024, a femicide was reported almost every three and a half days. In those months in 2025, a femicide of girls and adolescents was recorded almost every five and a half days.

This femicidal violence in the country with firearms from January to May 2024 was 9, and in those months in 2025, 5 femicides of girls and adolescents were recorded. During the administration of Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo [2024-2030], 37 femicides were recorded from October 2024 to May 2025, a monthly average of 4.6 [REDIM, 2025].

In 2019, the National System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents [SIPINNA] reported that 7 out of 10 adolescents had suffered violence in their romantic relationships. Of these, 76% of adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17 had suffered psychological violence, 17% sexual violence, and 15% physical violence [SIPINNA, 2019]. . It is concerning that these percentages were taken from the National Survey on Dating Violence [ENVIN], the only survey ever conducted by INEGI [INEGI, 2007], which gives us an idea of the little importance that the government, at all three levels, attaches to this issue.

Chiapas is one of the states with the highest number of gender-based violence alerts against women [AVGM] in the country. Since 2016, seven municipalities have been included in the State Gender Alert Programme: Comitán de Domínguez, Chiapa de Corzo, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Tapachula, Tonalá, Tuxtla Gutiérrez and Villaflores are monitored by the government due to the high rate of violence against women recorded in these places [AVGM A, 2025].

Specific actions have also been implemented in the Altos Programme for 15 municipalities in the Tsoltit-Tseltal region, where customs and traditions encourage violence against women and girls [femicide, forced marriages and underage pregnancies].

However, the AVGM has been insufficient and ineffective in curbing these problems.

In 2025, official figures from the Chiapas AVGM from January to May report a total of 823 crimes reported in investigation files [AVGM B, 2025].

However, these figures do not include unreported cases, meaning that the results are underrepresented. The AVGM covers crimes such as femicide, intentional homicide, attempted femicide and homicide, rape, sexual abuse, harassment, human trafficking, crimes against sexual privacy or bodily intimacy, and sexual harassment, some of which are present in adolescent relationships.

### Box 1

Most frequent crimes		January - may 2025	
NO.	TOTAL	2024	2025
1	Family violence	346	332
2	Pederasty	143	145
3	Rape	90	110
4	Failure to fulfill family support obligations	85	63
5	Sexual abuse	58	45
6	Sexual harassment (hostil work or Quid pro quo sexual)	47	37
7	Crimes against sexual privacy or bodily intimacy	26	21
8	Attempted femicide	7	14
9	Intentional homicide	19	13
10	Attempted homicide	9	10
11	Femicide	13	9
12	Statutory Rape	5	8
13	Sexual harassment	11	7
14	Human trafficking	1	6
15	Political violence against women based on gender	3	6
16	Medical and technical liability	0	4
17	Corruption of minors and incapacitated persons	0	2
18	Sexual harassment of minors under 18 through electronic means	2	1

**Figure 1**

General concentration of crimes reported in municipalities with active gender alert in Chiapas.

Source FGECH

### Myths of romantic love as a trigger for dating violence

In our society, romantic love myths are considered signs of love, beliefs that tend to romanticise romantic relationships, leading people to tolerate situations or behaviours on the part of their partner that put their well-being and integrity at risk.

Romantic love myths encourage gender-based violence and normalise behaviours and attitudes such as possessiveness, harassment or the nullification of the partner.

Young women tend to give in, for example, to having sex with their boyfriend as 'proof of their love' or to prevent the relationship from ending because 'love is forever.' Some young women tolerate these behaviours because they have 'lost their virginity' to someone they consider their 'first love' or 'dream partner.' This is gender-based violence.

These beliefs remain prevalent because they are reproduced in the gender stereotypes found in media products consumed by 15- to 19-year-olds, making it difficult for a teenager to recognise that jealousy is not a symptom of love [myth] but of control. By accepting and validating manipulation as part of the romantic process, the abused person relinquishes their autonomy, which leads them to tolerate abusive behaviour from their partner.

Dating violence [or intimate partner violence] is part of what is known as gender-based violence [also referred to as violence against women or sexist violence]. This is violence experienced by girls and women simply because they are women. The warning signs in dating relationships are listed in Table 1.

### Box 2

**Table 1**

Warning signs in a courtship

Situation of violence	Warning signal
Need for partner control	What she wears, where she is, how she spends her time, etc.
Jealousy	The partner still feels threatened by people from the past, relatives or strangers.
Manque de respect du consentement ou de l'autonomie	Insistence. Has been told no but insists on physical intimacy, getting back together after breaking up, or any other aspect.
Mood swings	He/she goes from being loving and caring to violent and irrational from one moment to the next.
Isolation	The person who is being abused begins to withdraw from their support networks, family and friends. The abuser manipulates or coerces him/her to achieve this.

Source: Mexicanos Primero and Fundación Naná

For Amelia Valcárcel, gender-based violence is a manifestation of power exercised by men over women; this type of violence is possible due to the patriarchal structure of society. Valcárcel argues that it is systematic because unequal relations between men and women allow violence to become an instrument for maintaining male dominance. Gender-based violence permeates everything, affecting relationships, the economy, politics, art, the media, everything.

These are not isolated acts and they are sustained by the brotherhood.

*The brotherhood does not fear the use of force; rather, it continues to be part of informal male education. Violence is always a resource that is there [...] In the old system, violence is accepted, it is always a possibility and, moreover, it is not frowned upon, but rather something that can happen.*

*It ranges from a crude comment on the pavement to death for honour [...]. Male violence is systematically inflicted on some so that all may learn [...]. It is inflicted on those who do not have the right education, the right character, who are not helpful, who are not respectful, who are not clean [Valcárcel, 2007].*

The following beliefs are considered myths of romantic love: love conquers all; the existence of love at first sight; the idea of a soul mate. Believing that the right person fills all aspects of our life; the test of love; thinking that when you are in love you cannot feel attraction for another person; and the most common, that jealousy is a test of love [Rovira Salvador, 2020].

These behaviours must be denaturalised preventively, teaching in the classroom that they are neither normal nor appropriate [Mexicanos Primero and Fundación Naná, 2025].

## Results

A total of 17 students [11 women and 6 men] participated in the design and implementation of the workshop *Myths of Romantic Love and Dating Violence*. This was their first participation in a UVD, which means that they had not done any outreach work as part of their training process, despite having taken the Gender and Communication course in the 8th semester of their degree programme.

The experiences recounted here come from a general review in the classroom and a survey given to the workshop leaders once the project was completed. They were asked if they were satisfied with the work they had done, what they had learned about the topics they had worked on, if it had been difficult to work on the workshop with high school students, what they had liked and disliked about the workshop, and if they would replicate this experience in other educational settings.

In general, their experience was described as a learning process that led them to personally understand the dangers of romanticising love in relationships. Designing the workshop led them to a process of academic research that they internalised on a personal level. Working on this topic allowed them to recognise different levels of idealisation in their relationships that opened the door to some form of violence or abuse in some of their romantic relationships.

*"Before teaching the workshop, we prepared ourselves theoretically and were guided by the teacher. This process was a reality check for me, as there were many things [ideas, actions, and behaviours] that I had normalised in a relationship and that, due to a lack of information, went unnoticed.*

*Or worse, there were things that I knew were wrong but simply ignored. Teaching this workshop motivated me to be the one to put everything I had learned into practice" [Interview, workshop leader, 2025].*

During the process, they realised that they had all romanticised love as a result of the social practices to which they are exposed, derived from gender roles and stereotypes that dictate how women and men should behave. Added to this are their media consumption habits and the fact that they do not analyse or reflect on the content they consume in their daily lives.

*"There were things or terms that I didn't know, but it was interesting to see things that I had perhaps normalised. I am in the process of learning about feminism and violence. It was an eye-opener to see things that we are taught are normal but are not, attitudes or thoughts about oneself that one feels one must abide by because it is the right thing to do, when in fact, we are being violated" [Interview, workshop leader, 2025].*

Members of the LGB+ community pointed out that, even though their relationships deviate from the heterosexual norm, the myths of romantic love and violence have become present in their relationships.

It is not easy to accept when violence is experienced in what should be a safe space, such as a romantic relationship. For this reason, we are grateful to those who, as part of the workshop review process, shared these experiences, which we do not make public because our class is a safe space.

*'These are issues that arise constantly and systematically in society... because they are "normalised", it is difficult to know when they can really begin to generate violence disguised as love' [Interview, workshop leader, 2025].*

### Space management and communication do matter when teaching a workshop

It is interesting how the university students recognised a generation gap between themselves and the high school students they worked with.

When we talk about a generation gap, we tend to think of a 10 or 20-year difference between people, but in this case, that is not the case.

When reviewing the work in the classroom, they said that although the age difference between the high school students and themselves was only 4 or 5 years, they did feel it. The workshop leaders are between 20 and 22 years old, yet they recognised that the way the two groups interact and communicate is completely different.

*"After the first day, I realised what it was really like to work with high school students, and it was very different from what I had planned in my mind, so I would have taken a different approach to the workshop. On the second day, I think things went better and were a little more dynamic.*

*Overall, I'm a little unsure about how much the workshop helped the students and how much they learned from it, which is why perhaps we should have taken a different approach, using examples and language that was closer to theirs, for example" [Interview, workshop leader, 2025].*

What was the most difficult thing for the university students when it came to running the workshop?

- Presenting the topic.
- Controlling the group.
- Interacting with the teenagers.
- Keeping the participants' attention.
- Adapting academic language for secondary school students.

*'At no point did I think that working on the workshop would be so difficult and tedious, but I am grateful for the understanding of one of my colleagues, who made it easier and more educational, but at the same time, these were experiences that generated reflection' [Interview, workshop leader, 2025].*

*'Interacting with the students was the most difficult part' [Interview, workshop leader, 2025].*

*'It was difficult to have fluid communication with the secondary school students, as some were very shy or even refused to participate' [Interview, workshop leader, 2025].*

*'The most difficult thing was being able to explain the topic and adapt the language for high school students. It's difficult when you're no longer their age, even if you're "young"; presenting it to them is not the same' [Interview, workshop leader, 2025].*

The group of workshop leaders said they were satisfied with the work they had done, and most commented that they would like to participate in similar projects designed for high school students; only one of the members responded that they might do so. All considered it important to open up more spaces to address these issues.

*"Young people are at a stage where they see everything through rose-tinted glasses; they normalise everything. In most cases, they imitate the "relationships" they see on the internet, which, as we know, are not entirely real. However, young people idealise them and relate them to a "perfect relationship" [Interview, workshop leader, 2025].*

### The importance of working tools

The workshop was designed as a sensory experience. The entrance and the room where the workshop took place were decorated with hearts and balloons that emulated the romance that accompanies romantic relationships [Figure 2].

The intention was to create a setting that would serve as a counterpoint to the topic that would be discussed: dating violence.

#### Box 3



**Figure 2**

Students from the state's Preparatory School No. 7 enter the workshop

*Source: Own photography*

Two wall newspapers were designed and placed outside the workroom. One presented the origin of feminism and why it studies violence against women; a second paper gave a brief introduction to the myths of romantic love.

The information from both papers was presented to the participants before they entered the workshop [figure 3].

#### Box 4



**Figure 3**

Ana Cristina, Sheila Yocet and Luis Ángel next to the wall newspaper they designed as an introduction to the taller.

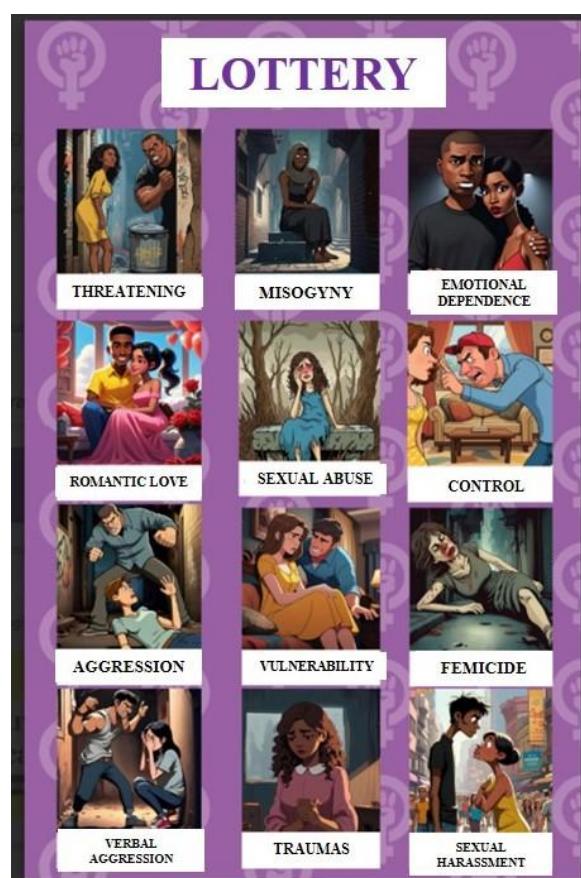
*Source Own photography*

The use of wall newspapers was important because it stimulates reading in a playful way, but also the creative process, since the information considered most important is chosen and its order is decided, so that anyone who has access to the newspaper can understand the topic that has been presented.

Another element that the workshop participants reacted to with great enthusiasm was the lottery game.

The lottery is a game of chance consisting of a deck of cards and game boards. A total of 18 cards were designed for the workshop and 10 boards were printed. Both the cards [which were projected on a screen] and the boards [which were used physically] were filled with images representing the myths of romantic love and violence in dating relationships [Figure 4].

#### Box 5



**Figure 4**

Lottery design by Ana Paula & Diego

*Source Own photography*

For the dynamics, groups of three or four were organised, which allowed the high school students to relax, joke with their peers and win some prizes.

This interaction improved the dynamics in the workshop and generated a willingness to attend to the topics that were presented afterwards, especially in the first session when the students showed little participation. As an acknowledgement to those who won the game, they were given heart-shaped lollipops [figure 5].

It is important to mention that the costs for the working materials, tarpaulins, decoration and stationery used by the workshop participants were covered by the teachers who participated in the project.

### Box 6



**Figure 5**

Students from State High School No. 7 play with the lottery designed by the workshop participants.

*Source Own photography*

The workshop leaders acknowledged that the workshop could be improved and listed the following areas that needed work or refinement:

- Internal communication within the working group.
- Include more educational activities.
- Preparing a schedule to measure participation times.
- More dynamic presentations.
- Choosing people who are more adept at interacting with attendees.
- Extending the duration of the workshop.

*"A different adaptation that suits the language and tastes of high school students. They may find the decorations a little "cheesy" [...] if I use that kind of decoration related to love, I wouldn't do it halfway, I would go all out [...] all that alludes to romanticism and my talk focused on demystifying everything that the environment wants to imply" [Interview, workshop leader, 2025].*

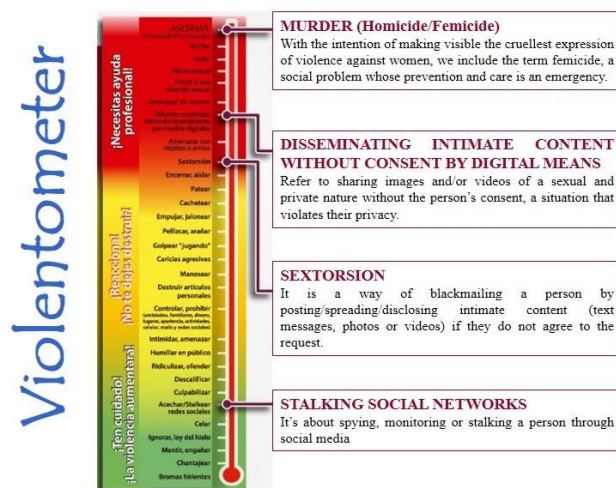
### The violentometer and the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence

As a teacher, one of my considerations was to provide useful information to the high school student community. It was vital to let them know that in Mexico there is a law that protects women and adolescents from violence, and to explain to them that this violence is measurable and increases with each action taken by the perpetrator; if we know how to detect it, we can leave unhealthy relationships in time.

The violence meter, as explained by the IPN [National Polytechnic Institute], is a graphic and educational tool in the form of a ruler that allows us to recognise the different manifestations of violence that are hidden in everyday life and that are often confused or unknown. The measuring instrument is divided into three scales [or levels] of different colours [Figure 6], each corresponding to an alert situation.

[IPN, 2025].

### Box 7



**Figure 6**

The violentometer designed by the IPN is a very useful tool to understand how dating violence works.

*Source IPN*

The latest version of the IPN's violentometer has incorporated some of the most representative forms of violence that are occurring in the digital era. One of the ways in which a person's autonomy is violated is through social networks, through the interaction and use of digital technologies. Stalking, stalking [checking] social networks or sextortion were themes that emerged among the high school students in the workshop.

The violentometer is registered with the National Copyright Institute, so it is important to use it without modifying it. For the workshop, those responsible for this topic chose a model that was not the one developed by the institution, but it was used because it was not possible to substitute it; it was explained to the participants the error and that the correct model can be found on the IPN website [figure 7].

### Box 8



**Figure 7**

Explanation of how the Violentometer works  
*Source own photography*

Once the workshop was over, during the review of results, the workshop leaders were told how important it is to check the information they use to avoid misinforming the people they work with.

Those responsible for this section were asked to be more careful in future projects, as it is essential to share work materials with colleagues before using them to avoid mistakes like this.

Research is important, and not corroborating information is unacceptable when working with groups that trust our assertiveness, especially when working with social issues such as violence.

*There is something I admired about the teacher and I recognise its importance, which is that she told us that we have to keep up to date, research, discover and study new trends, what young people consume, all of which helps us [Interview, workshop leader, 2025].*

One of the moments that most interested the young women was when we talked about the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence [LGAMVLV]. It was important for both women and men to know that there is a law that specifically protects women from violence.

To this end, a leaflet was designed to provide information about the law, in addition to the presentation that was given on the subject.

Talking about the LGAMVLV was necessary because of the levels of violence that exist in teenage relationships. Young women need to have information to learn how to detect the types and forms of violence they may experience in relationships that begin in these school settings. To see some of the results obtained in the workshop, you can watch the following video published by the Faculty of Humanities of UNACH [2025] as part of the work of the [UVD on Gender and Communication](#).

### Successes and improvements in the project

100% of the workshop leaders were satisfied with the section they were assigned to work on, although they expressed some difficulties regarding the organisation and delivery of the workshop.

There is general recognition of the willingness of all those involved to fulfil the assigned task, however, they acknowledge that the workshop could have been better than the final result achieved. They accepted that they faced some challenges in both organisation and internal communication.

The workshop was conceived as a collaborative effort in which the teacher responsible for the subject would give some guidance on the objective of the work and the needs to be met, but the design of the workshop would be the responsibility of the working group, with the teacher only intervening at the express request of the participants.

The groups were organised with each of the tasks to be covered. However, when delays occurred in the preparation of the workshop, one of their colleagues took the lead. This benefited the project as it brought the group together, given that *with so many people it was difficult to agree on everything and ensure that each task assigned to us was carried out correctly* [Interview, workshop leader, 2025].

They considered the choice of teaching strategies and working tools for the workshop to be complex, although the most difficult thing was to get the attention of the high school students; one of the workshop leaders interviewed acknowledged that they had not prepared sufficiently as a group to deliver the workshop.

*My colleagues were very willing to participate; it wasn't necessary to chase after each one to get them to do their part of the UVD, but I think the most complex part was the presentation to the students* [Interview, workshop leader, 2005].

For the workshop leaders, one of the challenges was to take ownership of the space and control the narrative. For a workshop leader, information is vital, and it is often obtained from what the participants consume [characters, film plots, series, music or video games]; using common examples allows them to create a bond with those attending the workshop.

It was not possible to find out what media products the students who participated in the workshop consume. This made it difficult to establish contact with them, so we decided to find a way to break down that barrier and establish communication with the participants.

The workshop highlighted the need for a study on media consumption among high school students, as there is no information on this subject.

Some of the participants in the first workshop were dissatisfied with the first presentation. At university, it is common for students to use cards as a guide when giving presentations, but the high school group interpreted this as a lack of mastery of the subject and expressed their dissatisfaction.

For this reason, at the end of the workshop, after reviewing the results/reactions of the attendees, it was decided to make some changes: two presenters [one man and one woman] were chosen instead of the four who were originally going to present the teaching material; some slides were removed and text boxes were replaced with images and diagrams.

An activity was also organised with one of the dramatised videos produced by the workshop leaders. With the changes made, the material was better received by working group 2, and time management improved. The students participated in this UVD.

- José Ricardo Aguilar de la Cruz
- Ana Cristina Aguilar Gómez
- Ana Paula Alvarado Hernandez
- Ilse Lourdes Álvarez Coello
- Gustavo Adolfo Fanco Gómez
- Martín de Jesús González Castañón
- Diego Alejandro, González Mazariegos
- Nidia Salam Hernández Espinosa
- Guadalupe Yasmin López Luis
- Luis Ángel Martínez Albores
- Naomi Yadaí Méndez Santiago
- Sheyla Yocet Molina Grajales
- Karla Paola Pérez Aguilar
- Miranda Pérez Virgen
- Rodrigo Reyes Pascacio
- Karla Judith Solís Sánchez
- Daniela Vázquez Figueroa [Figura 8].

### Box 9



**Figure 8**

The UVD team Myths of Romantic Love and Dating Violence

*Source own photography*

### Methodology

The UVD is a practical and collegial endeavour, and was therefore developed using a qualitative approach with a participatory methodology.

The workshop leaders, the teacher in charge and the assistants were active agents who contributed to the construction of knowledge. The workshop, in its design and execution, was divided into three main areas: teaching, research and outreach.

In the teaching section, participants were taught the history and legal framework of feminism. In addition, a process of awareness-raising was developed with the group of students as part of the Gender and Communication UA regarding the violence experienced by women and how it is perpetuated through gender roles and stereotypes. To this end, the following films were screened:

- Hidden Figures. Directed by Theodore Melfi. 2016.
- The Colour Purple. Directed by Steven Spielberg. 1985.
- Wadjda. Directed by Haifaa al-Mansour. 2012.

They were also taught that violence against women is historical, that discrimination stems from sexual oppression, and that all of this is reflected in gender roles and stereotypes. To this end, in the research section, they had to learn about the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence [LGAMVLV], understand the difference between sex and gender, and carry out a general analysis of the impact of discrimination and violence against women.

The outreach section lists the implementation of the workshop, which aimed to raise awareness of the impact of gender roles and stereotypes on intimate relationships, the myths of romantic love, and violence in dating relationships. In addition, material was produced to disseminate the work carried out.

For the workshop, all activities were chosen by the group of students in a collegial manner; to this end, brainstorming was carried out; once the work plan was determined, teams were organised to cover their activities. Each group carried out its assignment with complete freedom, making the decisions they considered appropriate.

The teacher responsible for the project made observations or suggestions about what the group of students presented [Figure 9].

The following documents were also read:

- UN Women Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women [CEDAW].
- UN Women Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 95.
- OAS Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women [Convention of Belém Do Pará].
- Judgment of the Case of González and others [Campo algodonero] v. Mexico of the IACHR. Mexico of the IACHR.
- Mexico's General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence.

### Discussions

We know that it is not enough to be born female to be socially recognised as a woman; one must also acquire the appropriate behaviours and appearance dictated by society itself [Cameron, 2019].

Feminist studies argue that femininity brings with it a series of mandates that define how a woman should behave, look, speak, gesture, and dance, which are referred to as gender technologies [Bordieu, 2007]. This mandate is given to us by the sex we are born with, but as an obligation that arises from the social construction derived from gender [Serret, 2008]. There is an idea of femininity that prevails in our society based on hair, clothing, language, behaviour, all gender technologies [De Lauretis, 2000]. 'You look prettier when you're quiet,' 'Flirtatious, but only with me,' 'Feminine because that's how a woman should look' are set phrases that limit the lives of women, girls and adolescents.

Femininity is the male gaze on how a woman should be [Gutiérrez Zenteno, 2023], but it is also an element of oppression that dictates how women should behave: perfectly. When this mandate is broken, violence is perpetrated against them for transgressing the norm [Vega Montiel, 2019].

The Belém Do Pará Convention first established in 1994 the right of women to live a life free of violence. In its Article 1, it defines violence against women as: [...] any action or conduct, based on gender, that causes death, harm or physical, sexual or psychological suffering to women, both in the public and private spheres [OAS, 2025].

Subsequently, in 2007, the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence [LGAMVLV] was approved in Mexico by the Congress of the Union. However, this has not been sufficient to counteract the violence experienced by women, girls and adolescents.

It is important to note the role played by the media [MC] in the systematic violence experienced by women. They disseminate gender stereotypes and roles that validate mandates that covertly or openly oppress women.

The Beijing Declaration 95, in Chapter J, Article 236, points out the importance of suppressing the constant projection of negative and degrading images of women in the media, whether electronic, print, visual or audio.

As long as sexist stereotypes continue to portray women, girls and adolescents as objects, the idea that our role is to serve will continue to be encouraged, as shown by violent and degrading products such as pornography. Programmes that insist on presenting women in their traditional roles can be equally restrictive. The global trend towards consumerism has created a climate in which advertisements and commercial messages often portray women as consumers and target girls and women of all ages inappropriately [United Nations, 2014, p. 171].

## Conclusions

Disseminating information seems simple until you have the responsibility to do so, and when you work with adolescents, you face a variety of scenarios.

Leaving the classroom allowed the students of UA Gender and Communication to face a challenge: to design a workshop on a social problem such as the issue of dating violence. It is not easy to explain to a group of adolescents why jealousy kills.

Working *in situ* allows students in training to understand the importance of their decisions, how every word, every gesture, or the use of language affects the reaction of the people attending a workshop. Teaching a younger person a workshop that addresses violence in adolescent relationships allowed the group of university workshop leaders to appreciate the diversity of elements present in the construction of knowledge and the management of information.

This workshop allowed them to reflect on their use of body language when giving the presentation, understand how complex group management can be, the impact [positive or negative] that the design of the material used can have, and understand the importance of in-depth research that allows them to master the subject matter.

Bringing these university students closer to a vulnerable group changed their perception of the social issues they worked with. They understood the importance of working on violence prevention from an early age but, above all, of teaching adolescents that much of what the media portrays as 'normal' in a romantic relationship is not [such as jealousy or the search for a soul mate].

We need to provide information about the behaviours and attitudes that can lead adolescents into violent relationships. To think that social media will educate them is to fail to understand that social media works on the basis of algorithms that users construct according to what they consume, and adolescents do not consume information related to violence or women's rights.

The university outreach work carried out by UNACH through the UVDs allows us as teachers to create learning spaces for our students, which fosters a link with the community. It is necessary to inform not only the population but also public officials, training them and including a gender perspective in their daily work, as the state is responsible for guaranteeing and protecting the rights of girls and adolescents. This UVD is the beginning of a series of workshops that will be given in various educational spaces.

## Citation

*The fraternity does not fear the use of force, but rather this continues to be part of informal male education. Violence is always a resource that is there [...] In the old system, violence is accepted, it is always a possibility and, moreover, it is not frowned upon, but rather something that can happen. It ranges from a rude comment on the pavement to death for honour [...]. Male violence is systematically inflicted on some so that all may learn [...]. It is inflicted on those who do not have the right education, the right character, who are not helpful, who are not respectful, who are not clean [Valcárcel, 2007].*

Programmes that insist on presenting women in their traditional roles can be equally restrictive. The global trend towards consumerism has created a climate in which advertisements and commercial messages often present women as consumers and target girls and women of all ages inappropriately [United Nations, 2014, p. 171].

### Declarations

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. They have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the article reported in this article.

### Author contribution

*Gutiérrez-Zenteno, Sheila Xoloxochitl.* Teacher responsible for the extension project; designed the basic proposal, trained the workshop group, contributed to the design and execution of the workshop.

*Gálvez-Rendón, Marco Antonio:* Assistant teacher on the project.

*Enríquez-García, Roldán.* Assistant teacher on the project.

*Marín-Levario, Carmen Guadalupe.* Guest teacher invited to discuss and review the article.

### Availability of data and materials

The project record and the report supporting this UVD are kept by the University System of Teaching Linkage Units of the Autonomous University of Chiapas.

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### Abbreviations

AVGM. Alert on gender-based violence against women.

INEGI. National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics.

IPN. National Polytechnic Institute.

LGAMVLV. General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence.

OAS. Organisation of American States.

UN. United Nations.

SIPPINA. National System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents.

SUVID. University System of Teaching Linkage Units.

UA. Academic unit.

UNACH. Autonomous University of Chiapas

UVD. Teaching Linkage Unit.

### References

This work draws on the experiences of the group of students who designed and ran the workshop.

Their observations were noted during the review of the results and they were asked to complete a short questionnaire. The textual quotations from the experiences shared by the workshop participants are anonymous, as the questionnaires were completed without identification so that they would feel more comfortable sharing their experiences. References are provided in the consultation of statistics and definitions.

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## Study habits and anxiety in secondary school students

## Hábitos de estudio y ansiedad en alumnos de secundaria

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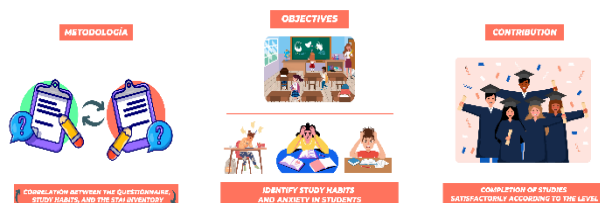
## Abstract

The present investigation was carried out through the interrelation between two important psychological processes in terms of learning and school performance of secondary school students, these are study habits and anxiety. The methodology used is the correlation between study habits and anxiety, having as an initial objective the identification of study habits with the José Luis Díaz Vega questionnaire and for anxiety with the State-trait Inventory. Another objective sought is to obtain the correlation between study habits and anxiety. The research contributes by identifying and proposing activities so that high school students can regulate their anxiety processes through study habits applied daily during their school learning activities, so that they can obtain the study skills that lead them to success.

## Resumen

La presente investigación se llevó a cabo a través de la interrelación en entre dos procesos psicológicos importantes en cuanto al impacto en aprendizaje y rendimiento escolar de los alumnos de secundaria, se trata de los hábitos de estudio y interacción con la ansiedad. La metodología que se utiliza es la correlación entre los hábitos de estudio y la ansiedad, teniendo como objetivo inicial la identificación de los hábitos de estudio con el cuestionario de José Luis Díaz Vega y para la ansiedad con el Inventario de Ansiedad Estado-Rasgo. Otro objetivo que se busca es obtener la correlación entre los hábitos de estudio con la ansiedad. La investigación contribuye con identificar y proponer actividades para que los alumnos de secundaria puedan regular sus procesos de ansiedad mediante hábitos de estudio aplicados cotidianamente durante sus actividades escolares de aprendizaje, para que lleguen a obtener las habilidades de estudio que les lleve el éxito.

## STUDY HABITS AND ANXIETY IN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS



## HÁBITOS DE ESTUDIO Y ANSIEDAD EN ALUMNOS DE SECUNDARIA



## Study Habits, Anxiety, Secondary school students

## Hábitos de estudio, Ansiedad, Alumnos de secundaria

Area: Advocacy and attention to national problems

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Peer review under the responsibility of the Scientific Committee MARVID<sup>®</sup> - in the contribution to the scientific, technological and innovation Peer Review Process through the training of Human Resources for continuity in the Critical Analysis of International Research.



## Introduction

Secondary school students, and students at any others educational level, experience psychological processes that can interfere with learning. Anxiety is a common psychological process among students and can hinder adequate access to curriculum content. Study habits are ways in which students acquire knowledge, whether consciously or unconsciously, of their actions during learning.

Thus, research is being conducted on the interrelationship between study habits and anxiety in secondary school students. This is important because identifying the relationship between these factors will allow for various actions address anxiety and prevent academic failure.

## Some background:

In the 2020 study titled “Study habits anxiety in andragogic students” conducted in Lima, Perú by Rosa Esther Montes Valer [2020], the objective was to find the relationship between study. 202 and self-assessment of anxiety in andragogic students.

The result was a negative relationship: higher anxiety means lower study habits. In the 2020 study “Exam anxiety and study habits in higher Education” conducted by María Isabel Ruiz Segarra [2020] in Ecuador, the instruments “Study habits and Learning Motivation Questionnaire” were used to link study habits and anxiety. The results showed poor study habits, low anxiety, and a negative correlation between study habits and anxiety.

## Anxiety

Anxiety disorders include disorders that share characteristics of excessive fear and anxiety, and related behavioral disorders. Fear is the emotional response to a real or perceived imminent threat, while anxiety is the anticipation of a future threat. Asociación Psiquiátrica Americana [2024].

Anxiety is an unpleasant emotional state accompanied by somatic and psychological changes, which can be an adaptative reaction or a symptom of other disorders. It is characterized by feelings of worry, apprehension, and unease.

Often related to the anticipation of future events. It also includes fear or premonition of danger or misfortune, as well as worry, distress, or somatic symptoms of tensions. The origin of the anticipated danger can be internal or external [Organización Mundial de la Salud, 2022].

Miguel Sanz Expósito [2023] states the anxiety can be adaptative or pathological, adaptative anxiety has the following characteristics behavioral and temporal proportionality, a reaction to solve situation through escape or confrontation, and it improves performance in activities that arise. Pathological anxiety presents whit behavioral exaggeration and elevated temporality, if focuses on fear and its symptoms and blocks adequate performance.

The anxiety addressed in the State- Trait Anxiety Inventory comes in two forms: state anxiety and trait anxiety. Trait anxiety is a part of personality, an acquired tendency that predisposes a person to perceive a wide range of objectively non-dangerous circumstances as threatening and to respond to these whit anxiety reactions of disproportionate intensity and magnitude to the objective danger. Ruiz [2018].

Miguel Sanz Expósito [2023] states that anxiety can be adaptive or pathological. Adaptive anxiety has the following characteristics: behavioural and temporal proportionality, a reaction to resolve a situation through flight or confrontation, and improved performance in the activities that arise. Pathological anxiety presents with behavioural exaggeration and high temporality, focuses on fear and its symptoms, and blocks adequate performance.

The anxiety addressed in the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory comes in two forms: state anxiety and trait anxiety. Trait anxiety is part of the personality, an acquired tendency that predisposes a person to perceive a wide range of objectively non-dangerous circumstances as threatening and to respond to them with anxiety reactions that are disproportionate in intensity and magnitude to the objective danger. Ruiz [2018]

State anxiety is defined as an emotional state characterized by consciously perceived subjective feelings of fear and tension, accompanied or associated with the activation or increase of physiological activity. Ruiz [2018].

Some factors can act as triggers for anxiety: the importance and imminence of the event, the threat of failure, novel/unknown situations, and frustrating experiences.

Students are not exempt from experiencing anxiety, as they often have to resolve issues inherent to their social role. According to Woolfolk [2006], 'Anxiety interferes with learning and test performance in three ways: attention focus, learning, and evaluation.' One of the main factors in the origin of anxiety in secondary school pupils and other students is evaluation, and even more so, exams, which can cause 'terror.'

#### Study and habits

Study is the activity of researching, analyzing and understanding educational processes, either through practice or theoretical reflection. Sergio Sánchez Cerezo [1996]. García-Huidobro in Lozano, Pacheco and Rodríguez [2017] defines study as a conscious and voluntary activity to analyze, understand and deepen knowledge and experiences, putting all of the individual's intellectual capacities into operation. Study activates behavioral, emotional and cognitive aspects.

In order to achieve the best results for academic success, students need to have the most structured and conscious study techniques.

According to the Dictionary of Educational Sciences de Sánchez Cerezo [1996], study techniques are a set of strategies and methods that students use to improve their learning, understanding and retention of information.

According to Sánchez Cerezo [1996], study habits are consistent modes of action that a student uses to interact with new content, with the aim of understanding and applying it. This definition can be understood from what habits are according to Sergio Sánchez Cerezo [1996]

A habit can be acquired, formed consciously and unconsciously, and through continuous repetition, it can become automatic. Forming a habit and applying it continuously requires psychological processes that occur in this formation, learning, motivation, memory, emotions, thinking, language, and personality; therefore, automating behaviours does not mean that the subject acts like a robot.

Study habits in José Luis Díaz Vega.

José Luis Díaz Vega [2016] divides study habits into seven areas, which are as follows: 1] Time management: inadequacy and procrastination, reinforcement of beliefs, control, achievement, attention. Use techniques such as calendars, self-recording, the Pomodoro technique, and blocking out time for work and rest.

2] Motivation to study: definition of motive, 'Specific need and desire that activates the organism and directs its behaviour towards a goal'. Morris [2011]. Anxiety as a natural response to stress can lead to increased motivation in people, alerting the body to respond to external and internal stimuli. It can lead to chronic fatigue, lack of concentration, critical negative thoughts, and has an impact on learning.

3] Distractions in study: These are environmental and personal situations that prevent concentration on activities aimed at acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes that impact school performance. Distractions can be environmental, such as technological, visual, auditory, or study environment. Internal personal distractions include worries, concentration, procrastination, negative thoughts [erroneous beliefs], and mental fatigue.

4] Note-taking: Note-taking is the action of writing down the salient points of a class and an activity that supports study and learning by maintaining active listening and writing. It can be done in readings that are part of learning activities. Students take notes, but in general they do not have a method that systematizes and organizes the acquisition of the required information. There are various study methods, including the Cornell method, the Feynman technique, and the Castagneto method, among others. The one used in educational activities is the Cornell Method. Not taking notes can exacerbate anxiety, leaving learning to an extraordinary memory that will be affected by an assessment, hence the importance of taking notes in an organized manner, which will allow for better learning.

5] Optimization of reading: This aspect leads to reading comprehension, one of the great challenges from basic education onwards, which will subsequently have an impact on higher education.

It affects the perception of the quantity and difficulty of the reading content and its subsequent assessment. Managing emotions when reading can have a negative effect and lead to a decrease in motivation. Reading should be done for pleasure, for the enjoyment of doing it, regardless of the type of reading, whether recreational, informative, or reflective.

6] Exam preparation: these are the strategies that students put into action to take an assessment. Exams are mainly the 'terror' of students, a situation that stems from mistaken beliefs, such as considering exams to be the 'teacher's revenge' or thinking that the exam grade defines them as a student. Therefore, students must have coping skills for exams, such as organizing their time, taking adequate notes, making their own study guides, and having positive attitudes.

7] Attitudes towards studying: Attitude has to do with how one thinks, feels, and acts in a situation or towards a person. Attitudes can be negative or positive, depending on personality and motivation, and they impact psychological processes and academic performance. Negative attitudes can lead to absenteeism, failure, and even dropping out of school, while positive attitudes can lead to academic, professional, and social success. It is possible to avoid anxiety by identifying its triggers, practicing various relaxation techniques, avoiding negative thoughts, and developing coping skills.

## Methodology

The research is descriptive, prospective, correlational, and cross-sectional. The variables used are study habits and anxiety. The working hypothesis is as follows: the better the study habits, the lower the anxiety in secondary school students.

The instruments used to collect information consist of José Luis Díaz Vega's Study Habits Questionnaire, which covers seven areas of study habits: time management, motivation to study, distractions while studying, note-taking, reading optimization, exam preparation, and attitudes towards studying.

It is a Likert-type scale with seventy questions and four response options represented by a letter: S means always with a value of three points, A means sometimes with a value of two points, R means rarely with a value of one point, and N means never with a value of zero points.

The values are reversed for questions marked with an asterisk. Direct scores are converted to percentiles. The significant score is between seventy and thirty points. From seventy to a higher score, study habits are considered adequate as they are at a high level, but there is still room for improvement. Between seventy and thirty points, they are acceptable as they are at a medium level, but there is room for improvement. Below thirty points, study habits are inefficient and considered low level.

The level of anxiety is obtained using the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory by CD Spielberger, GL Gorsuch and RLLushene. It measures two dimensions of anxiety, state anxiety and trait anxiety, and is a Likert scale questionnaire. Each scale contains twenty items with a score ranging from zero to three points according to their intensity: 0, none; 1, some; 2, quite a lot; 3, a lot. The direct scores are converted to percentiles.

The participants in the research are twenty-five secondary school students.

The instruments were applied to obtain their reliability using Cronbach's alpha and the correlation of study habits with anxiety using Pearson's correlation coefficient.

## Results

### Box 1

**Table 1**

Reliability of instruments

Instrument	Location	Level
Study habits Questionnaire	0,867	Excellent
State-Trait Anxiety Inventory	0.964	Excellent

*Source: Own Elaboration*

The reliability obtained in the instruments applied is as follows:

The Study Habits Questionnaire by José Luis Díaz Vega has a reliability of 0.867, reaching an excellent level of reliability.

The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory [STAI] by CD Spielberger, GL Gorsuch, and RL Lushene achieves an excellent level of reliability with a score of 0.964.

**Box 2**

**Table 2**

Correlation of variables

Variable	Location	Level
Study Habits - Status Anxiety	-0.349	Weak
Study habits - Trait anxiety	-0.374	Weak
State Anxiety - Trait Anxiety	0.870	Strong

Source: Own elaboration

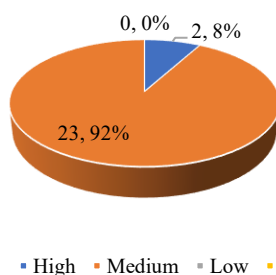
The correlation between study habits and anxiety in its two categories is as follows: between study habits and state anxiety there is a score of -0.349, which is a weak correlation; the correlation between study habits and trait anxiety is -0.374, which is also a weak correlation.

The correlation between study habits and state anxiety is weak and negative, as is the correlation between study habits and trait anxiety. The correlation between state anxiety and trait anxiety is strong and positive.

The distribution of the level of study habits of secondary school students is classified into three: high, medium and low.

**Box 3**

Level of study habits



**Figure 1**

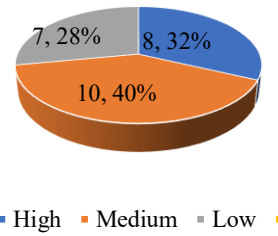
Level of study habits

Source: Own elaboration

The levels of study habits of secondary school students are at the medium level, with a total of twenty-three students, corresponding to ninety-two percent, at the high level there are only two students, representing eight percent, at the low level there are no students, therefore, it is zero percent.

**Box 4**

Level of anxiety state



**Figure 2**

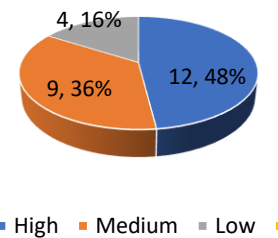
Level anxiety state

Source: Own elaboration

State anxiety is present in three levels: at the high level there are eight people, with thirty-two percent, at the medium level there are ten students representing forty percent and at the low level there are four students for twenty-eight percent.

**Box 5**

Level of trait anxiety



**Figure 3**

Level of trait anxiety

Source: Own elaboration

Trait anxiety is contained in three levels: at the high level there are twelve students with a percentage of forty-eight per cent, at the medium level there are nine students with a percentage of thirty-six per cent, and at the low level there are four students with a percentage of sixteen per cent.

**Conclusions**

According to the results obtained in the research, reliable instruments were used to obtain the data, as excellent levels were achieved.

Regarding the evaluation of study habits with state anxiety and trait anxiety, it yields a weak assessment, which somewhat influences the study habits of secondary school students.

Regarding the relationship between state anxiety and trait anxiety, it is at the highest level. This means that anxiety is more influential than anxiety stemming from external conditions such as assignments, exams, and other activities.

The correlation between study habits and anxiety is negative: with stronger study habits, anxiety decreases, and with greater anxiety, study habits are less effective.

These data allow for the planning of actions to avoid anxiety in students, which is why it is proposed to carry out workshops and courses on study habits directed at secondary school students to increase study techniques that allow for better academic performance. Likewise, students' knowledge of the anxiety process is also required, which is why conferences are proposed on anxiety and its process, so that actions can be taken to provide the appropriate elements for students to have better conditions to cope with anxiety.

The proposed activities must be inter-institutional, involving the Academic Unit of Psychology of the Autonomous University of Zacatecas, the Secretariat of Education of the State of Zacatecas, and the secondary schools that may participate.

## Conclusions

According to the results obtained in the research, reliable instruments were used for the data obtained, as they provide levels of excellence.

Regarding the correlation between study habits and state anxiety and trait anxiety, there is a weak correlation, which in some way influences the study habits of secondary school students.

Regarding the relationship between state anxiety and trait anxiety, trait anxiety is higher, which means that anxiety personality influences more than that which comes from external conditions such as work, exams, and other activities.

The correlation between study habits and anxiety is negative: if there are greater study habits, anxiety decreases, and if there is greater anxiety, study habits are less effective.

These data allow us to plan actions to prevent anxiety in students, so we propose workshops and courses on study habits aimed at secondary school students to increase study techniques that allow for better academic performance.

Likewise, students also need to understand the process of anxiety, so conferences on anxiety and its process are proposed so that actions can be taken to provide students with the appropriate tools to better cope with anxiety.

The proposed activities should be inter-institutional, involving the Academic Unit of Psychology at the Autonomous University of Zacatecas, the Zacatecas State Department of Education, and participating secondary schools.

## Declarations

## Conflict of interests

The authors declare no interest conflict. They have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the article reported in this article.

## Author contribution

*Lozano-Gutiérrez, Jorge Luis, Pacheco-Amigo, Beatriz Mabel and Solís-Recéndez, Emma Perla.*: Contributed to the project idea, research method and technique.

## Availability of data and material

The data show in the present manuscript as well as the results and the findings that support it are openly available to the public.

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

## Teaching strategies in educational robotics courses with a playful approach and segmented by age [2018-2025]

### Estrategias didácticas en cursos de robótica educativa con enfoque lúdico y segmentado por edades [2018-2025]

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#### Classification:

Area: Engineering  
Field: Engineering  
Discipline: Mechanical Engineering  
Sub-discipline: Robotics

#### Abstract

This article presents the educational experience developed since 2018 in robotics courses for children aged 3 to 15 in Tehuacán, Puebla. With a playful and age-segmented approach, accessible materials such as Arduino Nano, 3D printing, and sensors are used, and practical learning through competitions is prioritized. The adapted projects include Escornabot for the youngest, Bluetooth-controlled mobile robots for middle ages, and app-controlled boats for older participants. This experience has proven sustainable, motivating, and effective in promoting STEM skills, creativity, and teamwork.

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#### Resumen

Este artículo presenta la experiencia educativa desarrollada desde 2018 en cursos de robótica para niños de 3 a 15 años en Tehuacán, Puebla. Con un enfoque lúdico y segmentado por edad, se emplean materiales accesibles como Arduino Nano, impresión 3D y sensores, y se prioriza el aprendizaje práctico mediante competencias. Se detallan los proyectos adaptados por grupo: Escornabot para los más pequeños, robots móviles Bluetooth para edades medias y barcos controlados por app para los mayores. La experiencia ha demostrado ser sostenible, motivadora y eficaz para fomentar habilidades STEM, creatividad y trabajo en equipo.

Teaching strategies in educational robotics courses with a playful approach and segmented by age (2018-2025)		
Objective	Methodology	Contribution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting STEM skills in children aged 3 to 15</li> <li>Developing computational thinking</li> <li>Promoting teamwork and creativity</li> <li>Introducing robotics through games</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age-based segmentation (3-7, 8-11, 12-15)</li> <li>Playful activities               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Escornabot</li> <li>Bluetooth cart</li> <li>Boat</li> </ul> </li> <li>3D printed model assembly and electronics.</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replicable Strategies for Educational Robotics</li> <li>Development of STEM Skills</li> <li>Teamwork and Creativity</li> <li>Motivation for Participants and Their Families</li> <li>Innovation in Non-School Spaces</li> </ul> 

Estrategias didácticas en cursos de robótica educativa con enfoque lúdico y segmentado por edades (2018-2025)		
Objetivo	Metodología	Contribución
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promover habilidades STEM en niños de 3 a 15 años</li> <li>Desarrollar el pensamiento computacional</li> <li>Promover trabajo en equipo y creatividad</li> <li>Introducción a la robótica con juegos</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Segmentación por edades (3-7, 8-11, 12-15)</li> <li>Actividades lúdicas               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Escornabot</li> <li>Carrito bluetooth</li> <li>Barco</li> </ul> </li> <li>Ensamblaje de piezas 3D y Electrónica.</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estrategias replicables de robótica Educativa</li> <li>Desarrollo de habilidades STEM</li> <li>Trabajo en equipo y creatividad</li> <li>Motivación en los participantes y sus familias</li> <li>Innovación en espacio NO escolares</li> </ul> 

#### Educational robotics, Arduino, Competency-based learning

#### Robótica educativa, Arduino, Aprendizaje por competencias

Area: Advocacy and attention to national problems

**Citation:** Sánchez-Delgado, Octavio, Vargas-Flores, Rosario, Hernández-Guzmán, Julieta Edith and Noguero-Soto, Alfonso. [2025]. Teaching strategies in educational robotics courses with a playful approach and segmented by age [2018-2025]. Journal of Philosophy and Daily Life. 11[27]1-8: e41127108.



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Peer review under the responsibility of the Scientific Committee MARVID® - in the contribution to the scientific, technological and innovation Peer Review Process through the training of Human Resources for continuity in the Critical Analysis of International Research.



## Introduction

Educational robotics has gained relevance as a teaching tool that allows students to develop skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics [STEM] from an early age. In this context, we present the experience of a course implemented since 2018 at the El Paseo Tehuacán Sport Club, designed for children aged 3 to 15 with a playful, practical, and collaborative approach.

The uniqueness of this experience lies in its division by age groups, adapting both the level of technical complexity and the form of interaction with the robots. Over the course of five editions [2018, 2019, 2023, 2024 and 2025], the methodological design has been optimised to prioritise active participation and play as the central axis of learning.

We will now present specific information about each group of participants, the general characteristics of the robots for each group, the activities carried out by the participants, and finally the updates that have been made to prioritise play and the handling of the robots built.

## Development.

### Division of Groups

The teaching strategy divides participants into groups by age, considering the youngest to be in the 3 to 7 age range, the middle group to be 8 to 11 years old, and the oldest to be 12 to 15 years old.

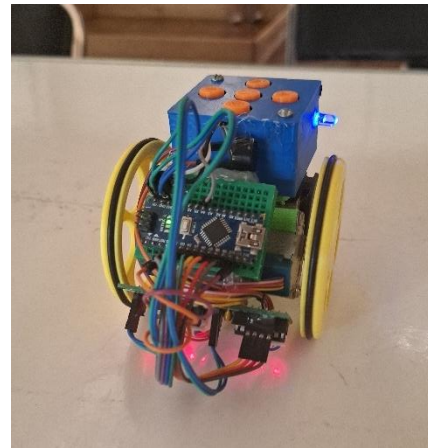
It is important to note that each edition of the course has had a different number of participants, who vary in age range. For this reason, in previous editions, two groups of the same age range were separated, or there were groups with many participants, which led to a search for alternatives.

### Escornabot Robot

For the youngest participants, the Escornabot robot was used, which ‘is an open code/hardware project whose objective is to bring robotics and programming closer to children’ [escornabot, 2025].

This robot was chosen for its educational objectives, the construction of each robot, its control via buttons, and its ease of use and construction, which has allowed the youngest participants to assemble their own robot with the excitement of seeing it work as soon as it is finished. [escornabot,2025]

## Box 1



**Figure 1**

Escornabot Robot Circuitry

The robot requires 10 3D-printed parts in its Escornabot-DIY version [Rubio, 2025], with one part, the ‘Addon-keypadcover.stl’, being modified and printed higher up in order to make the buttons more visible and easier to use.

It should be noted that the button system was created by hand, as shown in the image. Although the robot has a configuration for 2, 3 and 6-wire keypads, the design of the keypad used is 3-wire: positive, negative and signal.

The electronic components used are: a handmade button panel, two 28byj-48 stepper motors with two Un12003 controllers, an Arduino nano, a small active buzzer, a battery holder, a mini switch, 20 M-H jumper cables and two M-M jumper cables.

Essential complementary materials include a 170-point breadboard to place the Arduino and connections, two 63x60x3 rubber rings, also called O-rings, to give the wheels better grip on surfaces, and a 14-millimetre plastic ball or marble.

The programming during the first edition of the course was carried out by the team of instructors. The code is available on the official Escornabot website [<http://escornabot.com/>].

The code requires the Arduino IDE, which allows you to download and configure the robot's operation. It should be noted that another code was previously used to configure the keyboards, as they are handmade and handle reference data that varies between keyboards. This test code is available on the same official website. In the most recent editions, programming is no longer necessary. All you need to do is connect the Arduino to the keyboard that is already configured and secure the connections.

### Bluetooth Mobile Robot

This robot was called the 'remote control car' by the participating children. It consists of four 3D-printed pieces, two of which function as a chassis and two as accessories for an activity called 'Robot Battle.'

#### Box 2



**Figure 2**

Robot battle with balloons

*Source: own creation*

This robot is designed and adapted by InvInc Tehuacán. It is a mobile robot controlled by a Bluetooth application, which gives simple instructions such as move forward, move backward, turn right or turn left. Due to its design and programming, it appears to turn on its own axis, which allows it to be manipulated in small spaces.

To assemble it, you need two chassis parts, two gear motors with wheels, a free wheel, an L298N H-bridge controller, an expansion shield for Arduino nano, an Arduino nano, and an HC-05 or HC-06 Bluetooth module. In this case, a Varogo AU 107 power bank is used, the chassis already has space for it, as well as an additional battery holder and two 18650 rechargeable batteries of 2500 mAh at 3.7 volts, in addition to a switch and eight Dupont or H-H jumper cables. To improve it a little and have visual signalling, four LEDs are added, two at the front in white or blue and two at the rear in red.

This mobile robot requires special electronic adaptations, which were made by the team of instructors before the first edition, and which are now being checked to verify their operation or replacement if necessary. These are: adding two jumper cables with male terminals to the gear motors for connection to the H-bridge; adding two cables and a 330-ohm resistor to each LED with a female terminal.

To assemble the chassis and secure the components, 30-millimetre M3 screws and nuts [two for each gear motor] and six 50-millimetre M4 screws are required to attach the top cover of the chassis. Each screw requires three nuts and three washers to ensure a secure fit of the chassis. Additionally, five 20-millimetre M4 screws with a nut and a plastic spacer are required [infinity.es,2025]. Hama Beads are used, which are placed before screwing the Arduino shield and the L298N into the chassis, in addition to their corresponding nuts. Four plastic belts are also used to secure the power bank and the HC-05 Bluetooth module.

Once the robot is assembled, a base code is loaded onto the Arduino, which will allow testing of forward and turning movements in a fixed pattern, thus verifying that everything is working correctly.

The mobile application is developed through APP Inventor, a platform that allows the creation of mobile applications for Android, the operating system of some smartphones. This tool is very visually appealing and uses block programming, which makes it easy to understand, like putting together a puzzle, but in reality it is a programme that controls your robot.

### APP-controlled boat

The APP-controlled boat, named 'El Barquito' by the participating children, is based on the design of Waterboot, an educational robot with a STEM focus, which was presented on the kickstarter.com platform to seek sponsors and fund its development. It was created by Slan Robotics in 2019. [Kickstarter.com, 2019].

There are several packages available for purchase, the most economical being the STL file package for 3D printing [\$39.00].

The use of Whaterboot was ruled out because it did not represent a redo of the assembly of this robot, but rather the focus was on playful use with an application or in autonomous mode. That is why it served as a basis and the concept was taken, the fin wheels and the guide for electronic elements adapted to those available at Mecatrónica InvInc Tehuacán were taken, who also took care of maintaining the boat concept, but with more parts that the participants should assemble and thus focus not only on recreational use, but also on the creation of their own robot.

This robot requires two SG90 servomotors, an HC-SR04 ultrasonic sensor, a shield for Arduino nano, an Arduino nano, an HC05 or HC06 Bluetooth module, a battery holder and two 18650 rechargeable batteries of 2500 mAh at 3.7 Volts, a mini H L298N bridge, and two LEDs were also added, one red and one blue. Twelve Dupont cables or H-H jumpers are required for the component connections, as well as a switch and a male power plug for the Arduino Nano shield.

The work done in advance consisted of making the connections to add 330 Ohm resistance to the LEDs and placing two female terminals for connection to the shield. It is also necessary to make some connections by adding a male plug for connection to a mini switch and the battery holder. On the other hand, it is necessary to modify two SG90 micro servos so that they become direct current motors, as well as straighten the pins of the HC-SR04 ultrasonic sensor so that the robot's cover can be placed on it. The 3D design consists of two base pieces, a cabin and a cabin cover. The base pieces are assembled with 40-millimetre M4 screws with washers and nuts, as well as a Styrofoam frame that helps it float in water, while the cover is secured with four of the smallest screws.

### Box 3



**Figure 3**

Finished boats demonstration

The same methodology is used for the mobile application as for the mobile robot. APP inventor is used to create the interface and its operation, whereby the participant touches the buttons on the phone and sees a movement reflected in the boat.

The code required for the boat's Arduino is programmed with the Arduino IDE and the configuration for the Arduino Nano. The code is tested using the Arduino IDE terminal. When the mobile application is connected via the Bluetooth module, the boat is ready for use in the games.

### Group from 3 to 7 years old

Participants are organised into teams of five children, who are tasked with assembling and connecting their robot, which they will learn to operate in order to participate in the final competitions. They are given a flat screwdriver, a Phillips screwdriver, and the nuts and bolts needed for assembly. It is important to note that, as part of the teaching aspect of the activity, the team is only given the part to be assembled, the tool to be used, and the necessary screws. The team is also organised so that everyone participates by placing a piece.

This particular group of 3- to 7-year-olds behaves in a very specific way: the older children always take the initiative and want to do the whole process themselves, while the younger ones get bored and prefer to play or do some other activity. That is why the support of young people aged 18 or 20, acting as carers [also called monitors], is essential in this activity.

While instructions are given to a team, the carers maintain order and support the instructors in keeping order and ensuring that all participants take part in assembling the robot in an orderly manner.

In the different editions, there have been different numbers of participants in this age range. In 2018 and 2019, there were 35 participants; in 2023, there were 50 participants; and in 2024, there were 24 girls and 34 boys, for a total of 58 participants. For the 2025 edition, there were 13 girls and 12 boys, for a total of 25 participants.

The course lasts two weeks, with one hour each day of the week so that, in the case of the youngest group, they can assemble their robot from start to finish during the first week, with the batteries being the last thing to be installed, but not before the work team checks the connections and the correct assembly and screwing of the parts, in order to ensure proper functioning and avoid damage to the electronic parts or malfunctions during use.

The following week, the first two days are dedicated to the team learning how to operate the robot with the buttons, setting up boards and challenges that each member must overcome. Here, the support of the carers is still important, as they help to maintain order. Normally, each carer looks after one team, although sometimes a carer looks after two teams at the same time.

This depends on the additional attention required for the youngest children, such as accompanying them to the bathroom, getting water or even food. Meanwhile, the instructors support the teams by explaining how the robot works, giving examples of how to solve the challenge, and verifying that the challenge is understood and that the robot is not faulty.

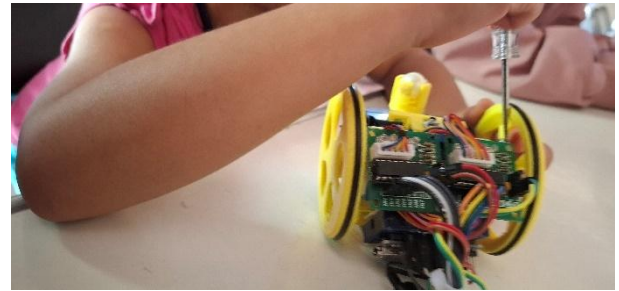
Over the next two days, competitions are held between teams, with boards and challenges, and elimination rounds. The aim is to obtain a group of eight participants who will go through to the final. If there is still time, elimination rounds are held among those who have already been eliminated in order to include them and thus have the eight finalists.

On the last day of the course, the parents of all participants are invited. The robots are shown and the tasks and activities that their children have carried out are explained.

This is followed by the semi-final competition, with 1st, 2nd and 3rd place being awarded. At this stage, the competition is carried out by direct elimination.

The awards and prizes for each participant are decided by the management of Sport Club Paseo Tehuacán.

#### Box 4



**Figure 4**

Assembly of an Escornabot by a beginner

*Source: own creation*

#### Group of 8 to 11 year olds

Similar to the younger group, the children are organised into teams of five, which have two initial tasks: to appoint a representative, who will be responsible for collecting and delivering the materials, and to choose a team name.

Once these two tasks have been completed, the objective of the course is explained to the whole group, along with the robot that will be built and the types of competitions and activities that will be taken into account for the development of the course.

This group also has caregivers, who are responsible for keeping order in the teams and attending to any particular needs of the participants.

In 2018, there were 55 participants; in 2019, there were 60 participants; in 2023, there were 60 participants; in 2024, there were 16 girls and 34 boys, for a total of 50 participants; and in 2025, there were 22 girls and 27 boys, for a total of 49 participants.

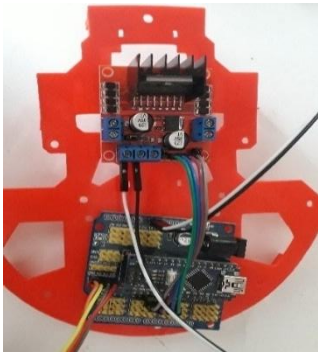
The course lasts two weeks, with one hour per day. which is why the first week is considered to be for assembly, the second week is three days of programming and two days for games and final competitions, as the aim is for participants to learn that software can control hardware and that, through an application on a mobile device, data can be sent and responses obtained, thus paving the way for the creation of technology.

During the first week, assembly begins with the delivery of the lower chassis and the two gear motors, which are screwed and adjusted with the help of a spanner and a flat screwdriver.

Sánchez-Delgado, Octavio, Vargas-Flores, Rosario, Hernández-Guzmán, Julieta Edith and Noguero-Soto, Alfonso. [2025]. Teaching strategies in educational robotics courses with a playful approach and segmented by age [2018-2025]. Journal of Philosophy and Daily Life. 11[27]1-8: e41127108. <https://doi.org/10.35429/JPLD.2025.11.27.4.1.8>

The wheel is fixed in place and then the H-bridge, the shield and the Arduino nano are fixed in place. This is done with spacers, screws, and nuts. The power bank is attached with plastic straps, and the front and rear LEDs are installed.

### Box 5



**Figure 5**

Basic circuit of the mobile car type mobile robot

*Source: own creation*

The connections are made from the servomotors to the H-bridge, from the shield to the H-bridge to the control pins, the LEDs are connected to the shield and the Bluetooth module is connected. After that, the battery holder is added, which is connected to the H-bridge, as well as the power cable that goes from the power bank to the Arduino shield.

Finally, the top cover or chassis is attached with screws, washers, and nuts to secure it tightly. The Bluetooth module is secured with plastic straps, and the switch button is installed, which is connected with the adapted cable to connect the power bank and the Arduino shield.

The wheels are placed on the gear motors. The teams then test the basic functioning of the robot. They are provided with batteries, and the robot must follow the following routine: move forward, move backward, turn left, then right, and repeat the cycle. If the robot does not follow the indicated routine, the team must modify the H-bridge connections or the communication with the shield, in that order.

The team of instructors developed this test code, which involves, in addition to movement, the lighting of LEDs, which indicate which movement is being performed in the sequence: forward or backward, the front LEDs light up; when it stops, the rear LEDs light up; turning left lights up the front left LED and turning right lights up the front right LED.

The team of instructors supports the teams during the tests to verify that everything is going according to the basic tests. If not, the participants are helped to modify the connections.

As for the development of the Arduino programming, one computer per team is requested, and the instructors are responsible for supporting the testing and development of the application together with the course participants, thus reducing development time. Taking advantage of the fact that computers have been requested, the teams are given internet access and the mobile application is developed.

The application consists of five buttons. The first button is assigned the code necessary to establish the Bluetooth connection with the device, in this case the mobile robot. The other four buttons have directional functionality, i.e., one goes forward, another backward, another to the right, and the last to the left. With these functionalities, the mobile robot can be made to move in the indicated direction. Each movement has an execution time of 20 milliseconds, so it is only necessary to press the button more times to achieve continuous movement in the direction indicated by the button.

The games played in the last few days are knockout games, so that in each round a list of winners is obtained. There are three types of competitions. The first is a circuit race, which has an assigned space and obstacles, as well as a start and finish line. The winner is the first to cross the finish line.

The second game is called Robot Ball, in which each participant controls their robot and must score a goal in the opponent's goal by pushing a ball with their robot. Finally, the game that children enjoy the most is the robot battle. It is played by placing two balloons on each robot at the rear and a syringe needle at the front of the robot, with which they must pop their opponents' balloons, but keep their own balloons safe. The winner is the one with the most intact balloons or the last one whose balloon has not been popped.

A list of the top three winners will be compiled, and Sport Club Paseo Tehuacán will be responsible for assigning and awarding prizes at the end of the course.

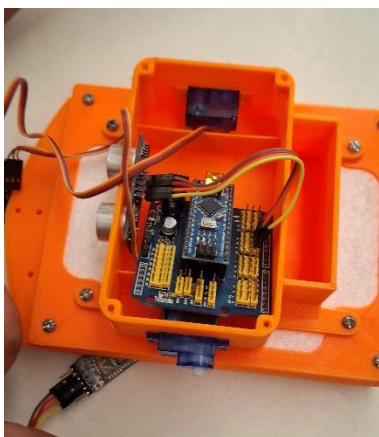
## 12 to 15-year-old group

For this group, the course also lasts two weeks, with the time distributed as follows: one week for assembly, three days of programming and two days of competitions. It should be noted that the robot they build is a boat, so a swimming pool or paddling pool is required to carry out the qualifying competitions.

In 2018, there were 50 participants; in 2019, there were 40 participants; in 2023, there were 60 participants; in 2024, the number increased to 22 girls and 52 boys, for a total of 74 participants; while in 2025 there were 70 participants, of whom 26 were girls and 44 were boys. To assemble the boat, we start by building the boat's chassis, the base that encloses the Styrofoam so that it can float. Next, we attach the cabin using screws and nuts, providing screwdrivers and wrenches to tighten the nuts.

Once assembled, the modified SG90 servomotors are placed and secured using the small pins that come with each servomotor and a Phillips screwdriver.

### Box 6



**Figure 6**

Circuits and basic assembly

*Source: own creation*

## Results

For the 2025 edition, the groups were separated as follows: small [4 to 6 years old], medium [7 to 9 years old], large [10 to 11 years old] and older [12 to 15 years old]. This resulted in four groups with fewer participants than in previous editions.

The results will be presented by section of the article.

## Conclusions

As for the division of groups, the organization of this 2025 edition allows instructors to pay closer attention to participants, so it is suggested that this be maintained.

For the assembly of the robots, the materials used are the same as those used since the first edition, so they have suffered wear and tear and parts have been replaced to maintain optimal performance. However, some require greater attention.

Reengineering is necessary in the case of Escornabot to improve the participant's experience during the assembly and handling of the robot.

In the case of mobile robots, it is recommended to design attachments that facilitate competitions with balls, such as RobotBall, as some get stuck during the game.

## Declarations

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. They have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the content reported in this article.

Escornabot is an interactive open-source robot.

The mobile robot and boat were created or adapted and are available to the public thanks to InvInc Tehuacán as open source.

### Contribution of the authors

*Sánchez-Delgado, Octavio:* Project idea, methodological development, course direction, robot assembly instructor.

*Vargas-Flores, Rosario:* Academic supervision, methodological support, Arduino programming instructor and monitoring.

*Hernández-Guzmán, Julieta Edith:* Logistics coordination in competitions and mobile application programming instructor.

*Noguerón-Soto, Alfonso:* Adaptation and electronic configuration of components, logistics, and technical support.

### Availability of data and materials

It is important to note that the numbers generated for participants, ages, and other numerical values have been mentioned in this document. Due to data protection, the names of the participants and their specific ages were NOT collected.

Detailed robot assembly manuals and mobile application and Arduino codes are available at: <https://github.com/deo5inco> or can be requested directly from the authors.

### Funding

From the first edition in 2018 to the latest in 2025, the funding for materials, batteries, spare parts, and tools has been provided by Sport Club Paseo Tehuacán.

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### Abbreviations

APP	Application – Aplicación móvil
DIY	Do It Yourself – Hazlo tú mismo
IDE	Integrated Development Environment – Entorno de Desarrollo Integrado
LED	Light Emitting Diode – Diodo Emisor de Luz
mAh	milliampere-hour – Miliamperio-hora [unidad de capacidad de baterías]

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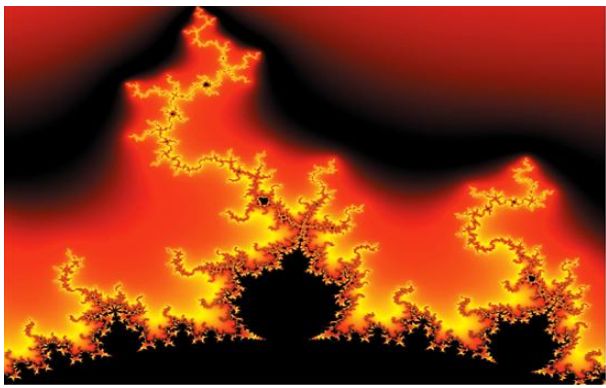
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