Abstract
Background: There is growing social concern about school violence but little is known about how this situation is experienced in the schools. The objective of this study was to know the perception that School’s head masters have of the school-based hostility, on their causes, how they value current preventive strategies, and their recommendations to develop future preventive interventions.
Methods: We conducted an exploratory study with 14 semistructured interviews of School’s head masters. Interviews were conducted at the Schools between May and June 2003 in 1 independent school, 9 state comprehensive schools, and 4 other comprehensive schools within the city of Alicante. Results: The perception of the head masters is that the prevalence of violence is low, more verbal than physical and within gender. They identify lack of punctuality, absenteeism and lack of interest as forms of hostility. As causes they identified age, family problems, school environment, society, media (TV and video-games) and poor language skills. Preventive methods in use were, on one hand, extralessons and transversal contents foreseen in the Education Law and common to all schools, and, on the other hand, ideological and pedagogical contents which were specific of some centres. Recommendations focused in demands for increased economic support and skilled human resources. Conclusions: School-based violence is not perceived as an alarming school issue, nor by its magnitude neither by the immediate causes and students’ characteristics to which it is associated. A heavier emphasis is placed on external and environmental causes perceived as much more difficult to confront.

Keywords
Schools. Violence. Qualitative research.