

PERCEIVED SCHOOL CLIMATE, PARENTAL MONITORING AND CYBERBULLYING AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract. *The aim of this research was to find out the connection between the perceived school climate, parental monitoring and cyberbullying among adolescents, and whether there were differences in these variables between two adolescent age groups. It was examined how the dimensions of the perceived school climate and parental monitoring explain the adolescents' experience of cyber victims and cyberbullies. A total of 309 Latvian students from grades 5 to 12 (200 respondents from grades 5-9 and 109 respondents from grades 10-12) participated in the research. In data collection Parental Monitoring Scale (Stattin & Kerr, 2000), Georgia School Climate Survey (La Salle, McIntosh, & Eliasson, 2016) and European Cyberbullying Intervention Project Questionnaire (Brighi et al., 2012) were applied. The results confirmed significant positive correlation between school climate perception, adequate parental monitoring and less cyberbullying. Also, significant differences between two age groups in perceived school climate, parental monitoring and cyberbullying indications were found. The younger group's adolescents provided more positive evaluations of school climate and parental monitoring, while the older group's adolescents reported more cyberbullying experience. The school climate dimensions Order and discipline, Character, Social support from peers together with negative aspect of parental monitoring Parental solicitation significantly predicted cyberbullying behavior in whole adolescent sample. These results create a better understanding of the variables concerning cyberbullying.*

Keywords: *school climate, parental monitoring, parental control, cyber victims, cyberbullies.*

Introduction

Bullying and cyberbullying may be a result of experience of aggressive or antisocial behavior experienced in home environment or in society as a whole. Research shows that both family factors and school climate can affect how many bullying incidents a child will experience. Therefore, it is crucial to develop systemic collaboration between schools and families to be more effective in reducing of bullying (Olweus, 2012). Bullying is usually an aggressive behavior towards a sub-group characterized by unequal power distribution and this

aggressive behavior can often be repeated using different methods (Olweus, 1993, 1994). Cyberbullying is a relatively new type of bullying that is described as bullying using electronic devices. Studies show that cyberbullying in 50% of cases is done anonymously (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). Some researchers consider online bullying as more harmful than face-to-face bullying, because it has potential to cover a larger audience and there is a lower level of supervision from adults (Sticca & Perren, 2013). Previous studies revealed that 93% of pupils who reported on-site bullying behavior indicated also their experience as cyberbullying victims (Hase, Golberg, Smith, Stuck, & Campaign, 2015).

Studies on online behavior of American students of different ages indicate that between 11 and 15, 34% of respondents experienced cyberbullying at least once (Cyberbullying Research Center, 2015), while between 12 and 17, 33.8% of students had suffered from cyberbullying and 11.5% were cyberbullies themselves (Cyberbullying Research Center, 2016). Different findings and conclusions on which age cyberbullying is more widespread are contradictory. Czech studies indicate that bullying is more common in younger age group (12 to 15 years) of adolescents (Ševčíková & Šmahel, 2009), while other authors conclude that older American students (15 years and older) show more frequent online bullying behavior compared to younger adolescents (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004).

Schools with clearly defined school policy and positive school climate have less probability of experiencing bullying (Olweus, 1994) and also students show less risky behavior in cyber environment (Lin & Chen, 2016). A positive school climate in secondary schools is linked to higher levels of student achievement and fewer cases of peer exclusion (Hanson & Voight, 2014; Johnson et al., 2012; Moos, 1987). This bullying preventing environment in schools involves successful school disciplinary structure, consistent and fair rules, as well as positive teacher-student relationship (Battistich, Schaps, & Wilson, 2004; Cornell, Shukla, & Konold, 2015; Goldweber, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw, 2013). Schools that have frequent conflicts, chaotic environment, insufficient monitoring, use harsh disciplining approaches, have safety problems, show more frequent number of bullying cases (Williams & Guerra, 2007). School climate is a social process that affects the subjective experience of participants (Cohen et al., 2009), because it includes norms, values and goals of the organization, as well as relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures (National School Climate Council, 2007). Researchers identify several dimensions of school climate – school connectedness, character, physical environment, social support from adults, social support from peers, cultural acceptance, order and discipline, safety and mental health (La Salle & Mayers, 2014).

Teachers' awareness and attitude toward bullying are important with regard to strategies, they will use to reduce bullying in school (Troop-Gordon & Ladd, 2015). Teachers and students may have different perceptions of presence of bullying in school. Although teachers report on their progress in reducing bullying in schools more frequently (Rigby, 2014), those students who believe that teacher perceives bullying as a norm showed higher levels of victimization (Saarento, Kärnä, Hodges, & Salmivalli, 2013).

Parents also play an important role in controlling and reduction of adolescent bullying behavior. Parental monitoring is defined as their knowledge of the child's whereabouts and what the child is doing (Guilamo-Ramos & Jaccard, 2010), as well as parental control and obtaining of information in different ways. A child may provide information on a voluntary basis (child disclosure) or parents may actively ask the child or his/her friends about the daily activities of the child (parental solicitation). Parental monitoring also includes introducing of clear rules and specific limitations on some particular activity of the child (parental control) (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Children who are more likely to tell their parents about their daily activities are less likely to demonstrate risky behavior. Research shows that children, who express greater trust in their parents, feel understanding and support from their parents, are more willing to cooperate and respect parental rules (Guilamo-Ramos & Jaccard, 2010). Excessive control and child tracking is not considered as an effective monitoring method and could be associated with more frequent risky behaviors in children (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). The studies also confirm that insufficient level of parental monitoring is associated to development of antisocial behavior in children and adolescents (Flannery, Vazsonyi, Torquati, & Fridrich, 1994). However, the ability of parents to monitor child cyberbullying experience is significantly limited (Goldstein, 2015). For example, parents may have insufficient knowledge of different social networks, but, according to studies, cyberbullying is most commonly reported among peers on social network platforms (Cassidy, Brown, & Jackson, 2012). Similarly, parents can inaccurately assess the time children spend on the Internet and the negative aspects of online interaction (Cassidy et al., 2012; Dehue et al., 2008).

The systematic involvement of schools and parents or guardians (Patchin & Hinduja, 2012) is needed to reduce the violent behavioral manifestations of adolescents in any form of its expression.

The following hypothesis and research questions were posed:

Research hypothesis: adolescents who will report lower cyberbullying behavior will report more adequate parental monitoring and higher perceived school climate ratings.

Research questions:

1. Whether there are differences in perceived school climate, parental monitoring and cyberbullying experience in two adolescent age groups from classes 5-9 and classes 10-12?
2. How different dimensions of perceived school climate and parental monitoring predict cyberbully and cyber victim experiences in whole sample of adolescents?

Methodology

Research participants

The research involved 309 Latvian 5 to 12 grade students from four schools, 144 boys and 165 girls. The respondents represented two age groups, respectively, grades 5-9 (200 respondents) and 10-12 (109 respondents).

Measures

Georgia School Climate Survey Suite (GSCS, La Salle, McIntosh, & Eliason, 2016) Middle/High school form (for 5th-12th grade students). The data of this research were collected as part of cross-cultural initiative of adaptation of Georgia School Climate Survey Suite in Latvia. The Middle/High school form includes demographic questions regarding grade and gender, and 36 statements about different aspects of school climate (school connectedness, character, physical environment, adult social support, peer social support, cultural acceptance, order and discipline and safety) with additional eight questions on respondents' mental health. Statements such as "I like school" are rated on the Likert scale from 1 – strongly disagree to 4 – strongly agree. Questions in the mental health subscale such as "In the past 30 days, on how many days have you felt sad or withdrawn?" are rated on the Likert scale from 1 – none, 2 – 1 or 2 days, 3 – 3 to 5 days, 4 – 6 to 9 days, 5 – 10 to 19 days, 6 – 20 to 29 days, 7 – all 30 days.

Parental Monitoring Scale (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). The survey consists of 24 statements, such as "Do your parents know how you spend your free time?" The survey is divided into four subscales of parental monitoring, such as parental knowledge, child disclosure, parental solicitation, parental control. Questions are assessed on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 – never and 5 – always.

The European Cyberbullying Intervention Project Questionnaire ECIPQ (Brighi et al., 2012; Del Rey et al., 2015). The survey consists of 22 statements, such as "Somebody has said nasty things about me, or has called me names through text messages or online messages, "I have threatened others through text messages or online messages". The statements are rated on a Likert scale where 0 – never, 1 – once or twice, 2 – once a month, 3 – once a week, 4 – several times a week. The survey consists of two subscales – cyber victims and cyberbullies.

Procedure

With the permission of the Ethics Committee for Humanities and Social Sciences research, and the informed consent of schools’ administration, surveys on paper were collected from 309 respondents in the context of Georgia School Climate Survey suite adaptation initiative in Latvia. The students completed all three questionnaires frontally, without time limitation. The participation was voluntary, taking into account the condition that students must be from grades 5 to 12. The data collection took one month. The results are analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 22 program.

Research results

In order to test the hypothesis on relationship between cyberbullying experience, parental monitoring and the perceived school climate, a correlation analysis was performed (see Table 1).

Table 1 Parental Monitoring, Perceived School Climate and Cyberbullying experience indicators Spearman’s Correlation Coefficients in the adolescent group (N = 309)

Variables	Monitoring Parental knowledge	Child disclosure	Parental solicitation	Parental control	Cyber victims experience	Cyberbullies experience
Perceived school climate scale	.38**	.39**	-.16**	.18**	-.47**	-.37**
School connectedness	.33**	.29**	-.01	.18**	-.19**	-.14**
Character	.37**	.32**	-.06	.21**	-.21**	-.26**
Physical environment	.22**	.20**	-.06	.14*	-.26**	-.18**
Adult social support	.35**	.37**	-.12*	.14**	-.30**	-.25**
Peer social support	.19**	.20**	-.01	.11*	-.28**	-.27**
Cultural acceptance	.22**	.19**	-.03	.08	-.29**	-.24**
Order and discipline	.30**	.31**	.00	.22**	-.31**	-.24**
Safety	-.08	-.02	-.24**	-.12*	-.15**	-.04
Mental health	.27**	.29**	-.19**	.13*	-.52**	-.43**
Cyber victims experience	-.23**	-.24**	.20**	-.08	-	.63**
Cyberbullies experience	-.24**	-.21**	.17**	-.08	.63**	-

*p < .05, **p < .01

Among many significant correlations, negative correlations between perceived school climate and experience of cyber victim ($r = -.47, p < .01$), as well as cyberbullies ($r = -.37, p < .01$) were found. The experience of cyberbullying has statistically significant negative connection with nearly all subscales of the perceived school climate, with the exception of safety. With

regard to parental monitoring, higher rates in the cyberbullying experience reported by adolescents relate to lower levels of parental knowledge of the child activities, i.e. in the group of cyber victims ($r = -.23, p < .01$) and also in the group of cyberbullies ($r = -.24, p < .01$). Similarly, in both groups, adolescents show lower rankings in their openness to parents – in the cyber victims group ($r = -.24, p < .01$) and in the cyberbullies group ($r = -.21, p < .01$).

Adolescents' perception of excessive parental control is positively related to their reported cyber victim ($r = .20, p < .01$) and also cyberbully experience ($r = .17, p < .01$). Thus, with increasing of perceived parental solicitation, also increases amount of reported cyberbullying experience among adolescents. There is a positive connection between cyberbullies and cyber victim experience ($r = .63, p < .01$). There are significant associations between the mental health ratings and positive aspects of parental monitoring.

With regard to research question about differences in perceived school climate, parental monitoring and cyberbullying experience in two age groups of adolescents, the means were compared by T-test (see Table 2).

Table 2 Differences in perceived school climate, parental monitoring and cyberbullying experience between adolescent groups of 5-9 grades (N=200) and 10-12 grades (N=109)

Variables	Groups				t
	5 to 9 grades (n = 200)		10 to 12 grades (n = 109)		
	M	SD	M	SD	
Perceived school climate	165.92	15.99	158.06	18.99	3.85***
School connectedness	15.63	2.55	14.23	3.02	4.31***
Character	21.27	2.21	20.58	3.15	2.23*
Physical environment	12.93	2.18	11.91	2.34	3.82***
Adult social support	13.59	2.21	12.39	2.13	4.60***
Peer social support	10.45	1.41	10.04	1.95	2.12*
Cultural acceptance	14.51	2.85	14.20	3.17	.87
Order and discipline	15.91	2.55	14.03	2.70	6.01***
Safety	11.26	2.93	13.39	2.57	-6.35***
Mental health	50.17	6.17	47.29	7.6	3.56***
Parental knowledge	38.46	5.70	35.32	5.30	4.73***
Child disclosure	19.44	4.10	17.61	3.72	3.87***
Parental solicitation	12.17	4.85	11.34	4.01	1.52
Parental control	18.38	5.72	15.75	5.62	3.87***
Cyber victims experience	3.41	4.65	4.30	5.71	-1.48
Cyberbullies experience	1.99	3.85	3.27	4.38	-2.65**

In the group of grades 5 to 9, the overall school climate is rated more positively ($t = 3.85, p < .001$), as well as the majority of subscale indicators (school connectedness ($t = 4.31, p < .001$), character $t = 2.23, p < .05$, physical environment ($t = 3.82, p < .001$), adult social support from adults ($t = 4.60, p < .001$), peer social support ($t = 2.12, p < .05$), order and discipline ($t = 6.01, p < .001$), mental health ($t = 3.56, p < .001$) if compared to older adolescents. In the group of grades 10 to 12, school safety was rated higher ($t = -6.35, p < .001$), while there were no statistically significant differences in cultural acceptance between the groups. Younger adolescents report higher parental knowledge ($t = 4.73, p < .001$), disclosure of information and parental control ($t = 3.87, p < .001$). There are no statistically significant differences in parental solicitation and self-reported of cyber victim’s experience between age groups. However, the older group of adolescents (10 to 12 graders) report significantly higher level of cyberbullying behavior ($t = -2.65, p < .01$).

Stepwise regression analyses were performed to answer the second research question – how different dimensions of perceived school climate and parental monitoring predict cyberbully and cyber victim experiences in whole sample of adolescents (see Table 3 and Table 4).

Table 3 Stepwise regression analysis for dependent variable cyber victims experience and independent variables order, discipline, adult social support in school and parental solicitation (N= 309)

Cyber victims experience (DV)	B	SE (B)	<i>b</i>	F	R ²
<i>Model 1</i>				39.97***	.12
Order and discipline in school	-.63	.10	-.34***		
<i>Model 2</i>				17.17***	.17
Order and discipline in school	-.64	.10	-.35***		
Parental solicitation	.24	.06	.22***		
<i>Model 3</i>				7.01**	.18
Order and discipline in school	-.48	.11	-.35***		
Parental solicitation	.22	.06	.22***		
Social support from adults	-.37	.14	-.35***		

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The results show that reduced order and discipline at school, parental solicitation, and insufficient social support from adults at school, significantly predicts the experience of cyber victims, explaining 18% of the variance in results.

Table 4 Stepwise regression analysis for dependent variable cyberbullies experience and independent variables order, discipline, parental solicitation, adult social support in school and character (N= 309)

Cyberbullies experience (DV)	<i>B</i>	<i>SE (B)</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> ²
<i>Model 1</i>				40.47***	.12
Adult social support in school	-.63	.10	-.34***		
<i>Model 2</i>				9.44**	.15
Adult social support in school	-.51	.10	-.28***		
Character	-.28	.09	-.18**		
<i>Model 3</i>				6.09*	.16
Adult social support in school	-.39	.12	-.21**		
Character	-.24	.09	-.15*		
Order and discipline in school	-.23	.09	-.15*		
<i>Model 4</i>				4.23*	.17
Adult social support in school	-.35	.12	-.19**		
Character	-.23	.09	-.14*		
Order and discipline in school	-.25	.09	-.15**		
Parental solicitation	.10	.05	.11*		

*p< .05, ** p< .01, ***p< .001

Regression analysis indicates that less available social support from adults at school explains 12% of the variance in bullying behavior in adolescents $R^2 = 0.12$, $F(1, 302) = 40.47$, $p < 0.001$. The character of a student, lower order and discipline at school and higher adolescents' perceived parental solicitation increase the prediction to 17%.

Discussion

Addressing the relationship among perceived school climate, parental monitoring and cyberbullying among adolescents, a significant negative connection between the perceived school climate and cyberbullying behavior was found. Adolescents who report to have experienced cyberbullying or who have cyberbullied others, rate school climate significantly lower. These results confirm findings of previous researches that more positive school climate is linked to lower peer bullying behavior in both face-to-face and cyber environment (Cornell, Shukla, & Konold, 2015; Hinduja & Patchin, 2012). The results of this research indicate that adolescents who reported their cyberbullying behavior have a significantly lower sense of school connectedness, are underestimating the quality of the physical environment, the adoption of school culture that includes respect-based mutual relations. There is less willingness to understand others and cooperate with them, lower sense of social support from adults and peers, and feeling of not receiving recognition for good behavior. The results are in line with

previous research findings that adequate discipline, clear school rules and available adult support are associated to higher ratings of school climate. A special role have both positive peer and teacher-student relationship that is associated with reduces bullying rates among adolescents (Cornell, Shukla, & Konold, 2015; Battistich, Schaps, & Wilson, 2004).

Those adolescents who acknowledged cyberbullying experience (both bullies and victims), self-reported significantly more mental health symptoms: sadness and withdrawal, intensive fear and somatic reactions, excessively uncontrollable self-harm behavior, extreme anxiety, difficulty concentrating and extreme mood shifts. Also, Hase and colleagues (2015) found but assessed as unstable the connection between cyberbullying and psychological symptoms.

Adolescents who have reported cyberbullying victims' experience, rate school safety lower, they report more fear of going to and from school, and being in school premises, and anxiety that other students might hurt them. They also noted that pupils fight and argue in their school. There was also a strong positive relationship between the experiences of cyber victims and cyberbullies. This suggests that considerable number of students who bully in the cyber environment are also victims of cyberbullying, which is in line with the results of previous researches (Hase et al., 2015).

There is connection between cyberbullying behavior and parental monitoring in general. Increasing parental knowledge about their children, as well as adolescent openness with parents reduces reported cyberbullying behavior. Conversely, parents' lower knowledge of daily routine of their child and child's reluctance to tell parents about his/her daily activities, is associated with higher rates of adolescent cyberbullying behavior. This corresponds with theoretical guidelines that appropriate parental monitoring and adolescents' willingness to share their daily events with parents are associated with fewer manifestations of risky behavior, while excessive control from parents relate to more frequent risky behavior in children (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Adequate parental monitoring in adolescence also is linked with more positive perception of school climate. Adolescents who report more adequate parental monitoring feel more connected to the school, are positive about school culture, received support from others, physical environment, discipline, and they self-report better mental health. In turn, excessive control from parents (parental solicitation) is associated with lower perceived social support from adults, a lower sense of safety and more negative adolescent mental health self-reports.

A significant difference between the two adolescent age groups in several variables were found. In general, younger students (grades 5-9) were more positive about their school climate and showed higher parental monitoring rates. These findings are consistent with theoretical knowledge and results of other researches that parental monitoring of younger children is naturally more

intensive, as well as students from younger grades typically show higher school climate ratings. In the older adolescent group (grades 10-12), respondents rated school safety higher, which could indicate that they feel more independent and possibly are able to assess risky situations better. There was no difference in perception of parental solicitation and the experience of victims of cyberbullying between adolescents in both age groups. However, in the older adolescent group, respondents more frequently reported their own cyberbullying behavior. This finding contributes to the controversial results of research with regard to age, in which cyberbullying is more common (Ševčíková & Šmahel, 2009; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). The results of this research probably interact with other factors that should be taken into account. Previous researches found a connection between teacher recognition of bullying behavior, including informing students and the number of reported bullying cases (Saarento, Kärnä, Hodges, & Salmivalli, 2013; Troop-Gordon & Ladd, 2015). It is possible that the older adolescent group (grades 10-12) had a better understanding of what cyberbullying behavior was, which allowed them to assess themselves more adequately. It is also possible that in the younger adolescent group (grades 5-9) aggressive behavior may not be associated with bullying, but perceived as a style of communication. At this age, it could be easier for adolescents to acknowledge and indicate that they have been bullied rather than that they have bullied others.

With regard to predicting adolescent cyberbullying experience, it was found that several aspects of perceived school climate and parental monitoring explained 18% of cyber victim experience. Lower order and discipline at school, excessive (inadequate) parental control and lower social support from adults in school environment significantly predicts the potential emergence of cyber victimization among adolescents. This corresponds to conclusions of other researches that students who are less likely to be cyberbullied are more likely to rate school discipline and order higher. These students indicate availability of support from teachers at school (Cornell, Shukla, & Konold, 2015; Stattin & Kerr, 2000; Williams & Guerra, 2007). Previous researches also show the connection between increased parental control and more frequent cases of risky behavior of children (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Addressing the variables predicting adolescents' cyberbullying behavior, it was found that perceived insufficient support from adults at school environment explains 12% of aggressive and attacking behavior in cyberspace. The prognosis increased taking to account the character of adolescent, associated with reluctance to treat others fairly, to help others and behave kindly. Perceived insufficient order and discipline in school together with perceived excessive parental control explain 17% variation in cyberbullying behavior. These results are in line with the conclusions of previous researches, which reflect the importance of supportive relationships between students and adults, the reduction of bullying behavior in secondary schools and more

successful interventions aimed at reducing bullying behavior (Johnson et al., 2012). These results emphasize necessity to implement prevention activities aimed at reducing teenage bullying behavior, what is possible if both school and parents are involved (Patchin & Hinduja, 2012).

Conclusions and Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is that adolescents were not additionally informed what bullying behavior is. It was possible that the participants of the research – adolescents of different ages, could understand and interpret cyberbullying differently. Also, despite of good internal consistency of scale, the Georgia School climate survey was in the process of adaptation in Latvia.

In this study, the relationship between perceived school climate, parental monitoring and cyberbullying experience among adolescents was approved. There also was found significant differences in most of the variables with regard to two age groups – grades 5-9 and 10-12. It was concluded that different aspects of perceived school climate and parental monitoring predicted cyberbullying behavior and cyber victim experience among adolescents. Positive school climate and adequate parental monitoring were related with lower cyberbullying in the sample of adolescents. Therefore, perceived excessive parental control was associated with increased rates of cyberbullying behavior. It emphasizes the importance to provide an age-appropriate parental monitoring in order to develop self-regulation capacity in adolescents, since excessive control was more likely associated with inappropriate and risky behavior in children.

These findings rise awareness of necessity to collaborate between schools and families to reduce bullying and facilitate adolescents' mental health.

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