



Juvenile Crime

Marko Nikolić



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Preface

Bullying and harassment of peers are the first possible forms and signs of criminal behavior in the future. That's why this book is starting from the bases, because the fight against adolescent crime should be addressed to prevention already in the earliest and "harmless" phase. Bullying behavior continues to be a salient social and health-related issue of importance to educators, criminal justice practitioners, and academicians across the country. First Chapter describes a study which examines school safety measures and students' perceptions about school environments, especially school rules and punishment. Found variables were statistically significant predictors of bullying victimization. Implications of these findings for school anti-bullying programs as well as directions for future research are discussed. Second chapter deals with relationship between parental absence and juvenile delinquency to determine if a link exists between the two variables. The overall model was found to be statistically significant. Chapter 3 deepens this topic and looks into differences between bullies, victims, and bully victims in terms of the quality of their relationship with their parents and school performance. In Chapter 4, they tried to investigate whether the quality of attachment with parents and peers predicts bullying and victimization. Secondly, they also attempted a moderation analysis in order to examine whether the relationship between quality of attachments and bullying is moderated by the child's gender. Finally, they explored whether there are significant differences in the quality of attachment between children identified as bullies, victims, bully/victims, and uninvolved. Although the link between routine activities and victimization has been tested and well established, criminologists have questioned if routine activities can explain adolescent violence across different social contexts in Chapter 5. Chapter 6. takes a step back being oriented to pre-school kids. With Chapter 7 we go to serious juvenile offenders. Factors that precipitate gang membership has contributed substantially to our understanding of gangs and gang-related activity, yet we know little about the factors influencing intentions to rejoin a gang after having being incarcerated. The study in Chapter 8. explores how perceptions of teacher and student intervention as well as perceptions of school safety and connectedness influence students' likelihood of responding aggressively (i.e., retaliating) or seeking support from an adult. Chapter 9 examined peer victimization and bullying preventions in schools. It tries to determine whether previous models of preventive strategies in a single school or district could be expanded to the nationally representative sample of adolescents across multiple schools. In Chapter 10 we explore bullying in rural areas, as a topic which was not studied enough. Chapter 11 focuses on the anomalies and contradictions surrounding the notion of 'international juvenile justice', whether in its pessimistic (neoliberal penalty and penal severity) or optimistic (universal children's rights and rights compliance) incarnations. Chapter 12 takes compulsory hospitalization by evidencing its use as a control and punishment mechanism that increases the social vulnerability of young drug users. It analyzes lawsuits involving juveniles who were consigned to psychiatric institutions for drug addiction treatment as a protection measure in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in Brazil. Gender differences in an Australian youth offender population is analyzed in Chapter 13. While Chapter 14 looks at young age, poverty, guns and homicide correlation. Following section aims to test the relationship between structural characteristics of schools and child antisocial behavior, using a sample of elementary school children ($N = 779$, aged 10-12 years in the urban context of Ghent, Belgium). Finally the characteristics of juvenile offenders who stop committing crimes are in focus in Chapter 16. Criminality among Victorian boys and girls in the 19th century is our travel through time in Chapter 17. Do we have the right idea? Chapter 18 states that investing in successful delinquency-prevention programs can save taxpayers seven to ten dollars for every dollar invested, primarily in the form of reduced spending on prisons. This is something that the whole world needs to take in consideration! Chapter 19 looks at the prevalence of psychiatric disorders in a sample of delinquent adolescents of both genders and compares the prevalence between genders. Can lower cognitive ability be related to increased risk for violent and other antisocial behavior? This study linked longitudinal Swedish total population registers to study the association of general cognitive ability (intelligence) at age 18 (the Conscript Register, 1980–1993) with the incidence proportion of violent criminal convictions (the Crime Register, 1973–2009), among all men born in Sweden 1961–1975 ($N=700,514$).

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CHAPTER 1

PREDICTING SCHOOL BULLYING VICTIMIZATION: FOCUSING ON INDIVIDUAL AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTAL/SECURITY FACTORS

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ABSTRACT

Bullying behavior continues to be a salient social and health-related issue of importance to educators, criminal justice practitioners, and academicians across the country. While discourse on school bullying is abundant, previous studies are limited in explaining the predictive effect of factors such as individual/demographic variables, school environmental variables, and school antibullying preventive measures. Using a nationally representative sample of 12,987 private and public school students in the United States, the current study examines school safety measures and students' perceptions about school environments (or climate), especially school rules and punishment. Findings reveal that the variables of security guards, fairness and awareness of school rules, gangs and guns at school, students misbehaving, and teachers' punishment of students were statistically significant predictors of bullying victimization. Implications of these findings for school anti-bullying programs as well as directions for future research are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, school bullying and victimization, which continues to be a serious social and health problem in the United States, has received extraordinary levels of attention from the public, criminal justice practitioners, academicians, and educators [1–3]. A significant number of empirical studies indicate that bullying and victimization is an increasing problem on school grounds and one that has negative consequences for both bullies and their victims [3–8]. For example, the School

Crime Supplement survey (2007) showed that 32 percent of students reported being bullied at school, while only 28 percent of students in 2005 reported being bullied [9]. Recently, Dinkes et al. [10] found that 75 percent of US public school principals indicated that schools reported one or more violent incidents to the police, and 25 percent of public schools reported school bullying on a daily/weekly basis. Numerous studies [11–15] also document that school bullying is physically and psychologically detrimental to the victims.

Limited empirical studies [16–22] have examined predictors of bullying victimization, and few have focused on individual and school-related factors. Yet these studies found that individual demographic factors (e.g., age, gender, and race) and school characteristics (e.g., presence of gangs at school, and police/school staff members' supervision) are significantly related to victimization. For example, a study

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by DeVoe et al. [17] found that victims of school bullying are more likely to be younger and white and to report the presence of gangs in their schools.

Most previous research on bullying, however, suffers from several limitations. First, the majority of prior research has focused on bullies, types of bullying, and related prevention/intervention strategies. Second, many studies have focused on physically aggressive bullying and victimization while ignoring psychologically/emotionally aggressive victimization, despite the fact that many children are known to be bullied not only physically, but also psychologically/emotionally [3, 23]. Third, while schools have attempted to create safer environments by implementing a variety of preventive strategies and programs, such as the use of school security technologies (e.g., metal detectors, and surveillance cameras), school security guards, and anti-school-bullying programs during the last decade, few studies have examined whether these preventive strategies and technologies have any significant effect on reducing bullying victimization [17, 22].

The current study, using a nationally representative sample of adolescents in the United States, takes a more holistic approach and addresses these limitations. Primarily, the focus of the current study is to determine whether various school safety strategies, the school environment, and individual social demographic factors are significantly related to each of the school bullying victimization categories. It is hypothesized that students who attend schools where there is a heightened safety outlook (including school safety strategies for a more safe and protective school environment/climate) will have less incidents of victimization than schools that do not have such an environment. Additionally, this study will examine three different categories of school bullying victimization (physical, psychological, and both physical and psychological bullying victimization) in an effort to help schools develop more strategic plans for reducing bullying and victimization.

School Bullying Victimization and Negative Consequences

According to Olweus [13], school bullying is defined as physical and/or emotional harm inflicted by students within the geographical boundaries of a school campus. More often, bullying includes repeated incidents of harm, is generally characterized by an imbalance of power and/or an asymmetrical relationship among students [7, 13], and harm is directed at specific students (or targets) [24]. Victimization (being bullied) of school bullying is therefore defined as repeated exposure to physical and emotional harm from more powerful students on campus [13].

Although the prevalence of victimization of school bullying varies in empirical studies, prior research has found that a significant number of children have been victims of school bullying [13, 25–27]. For example, a study by Silvernail et al. [26], using a sample of 4,496 youths in public schools, found that 41 percent of students reported being teased in a mean way and 38 percent reported being victims of physical bullying (i.e., being hit, kicked, and/or pushed). Orpinas et al. [25] found that almost half of the students in the sample were victims of physical bullying and similar numbers were emotionally and/or verbally bullied at school. More recently, the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicated that approximately 8 percent

of adolescents (aged 12–18 years) in the sample were being threatened and injured by other students. Overall, the results consistently report that our children are victimized by other students on school ground.

A number of empirical studies have found that school bullying has detrimental effects on a victim's physical and psychological well-being and also hurts his/her academic standing [7, 28–35]. For example, victims of school bullying are more likely to suffer serious mental health disorders, such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, and unhappiness, and are at greater risk for committing suicide [28, 33–35]. In addition, bullied victims are more likely to experience relational problems with their school peers, to be rejected by their peers, to dislike school, and to have lower grades [7, 29, 33]. These findings clearly show that victimization of school bullying is serious problem that requires changes to school environments in order to improve safety among students.

Predictors of School Bullying Victimization

Although any student can be a victim of school bullying, there are consistent characteristics of victims. Several empirical studies have found that individual demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, age, and race) are significantly related to school bullying victimization [16–18, 20, 21]. For example, Graham and colleagues [18] and Rodkin and Berger [36] found that girls are more likely than boys to be victimized at school and to identify themselves as victims. Age and grade level have also been found to be significant predictors of being victimized [13, 16, 17]. A study by Whitney and Smith [21] shows that risk of being bullied decreases with age. DeVoe et al. [17] also found that 14 percent of 6th graders in the sample reported being victimized, while only 2 percent of 12th graders were victims of school bullying. Similarly, Olweus [13] found that elementary and middle school students were more vulnerable to victimization than high school students. Regarding the relationship between race and school bullying victimization, the findings are mixed. A study by Seals and Young [37] indicates no significant difference between whites and racial minorities, while Mouttapa et al. [38] found that Asian youths were more likely than other racial groups being victimized at school. Other studies [39–41] found that students with mental health problems (e.g., anxiety, depression, unhappiness, aggression, and emotional difficulties) appear to be more vulnerable to school bullying victimization than students without mental health problems.

Prior empirical studies also indicate that negative interactions with parents and a home environment where domestic violence is present are significantly related to school victimization. Youths who have been rejected by parents and/or exposed to a harsh home environment, such as hostility and violence among family members, are more likely to be victims of school bullying [42–45]. In addition to individual-related characteristics, lifestyle and opportunity influence bullying victimization. Adolescents who are more exposed to opportunities to engage in risky behavior (e.g., skipping class or getting involved in a fight) have a higher probability for victimization than others.

Other studies [46–49] found that school characteristics and climate (i.e., school conduct/discipline, teachers' attitudes, teachers' support, rule clarity/enforcement, and students'

respect) are significant predictors of school victimization. In contrast, adolescents attending schools where teachers paid attention to bullying and intervened in or stopped bullying problems were less likely to be victimized [48].

Also, research shows a significant relationship between school safety/adult supervision and bullying victimization at school [49–51]. These studies found that students were less likely to be victimized when schools increased staff supervision of student activities in hallways and in the cafeteria. Additionally, students attending schools in which teachers were aware of school policies on bullying and in which school professionals handled victimization problems adequately tended to be victimized less often [50]. In contrast, lower levels of involvement by teachers in the establishment and enforcement of policies on aggressive student behavior were associated with higher rates of bullying and victimization [52].

Gottfredson and his colleagues [53] reported on a multilevel study of the effects of the school climate on students' victimization using a large national sample of secondary schools from the National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools. The researchers predicted that better discipline management (i.e., perceptions of the fairness of school rules/rule enforcement and perceptions of the clarity of rules) is related to lower levels of student victimization. Results from another study on the effects of school level security and related issues on the degree of school bullying victimization have been mixed. Schreck et al. [8] found no evidence that school guardianship, such as school guards/hallway supervision, metal detectors, and visitor sign-in protocols, affected overall rates of students' victimization in school once individual and school characteristics were controlled. However, they found that students at schools with locker checks and corporal punishment policies experienced less victimization.

Theory of School Climate and School Bullying Victimization

A few studies have focused on the role that the school climate, including school characteristics, plays in bullying victimization; most studies, however, overlook the ecological dimension of school bullying and victimization although framing school violence within this model is perhaps the most cogent approach. Bronfenbrenner [54], in discussing a more holistic perspective to human growth and development, proposed an ecological model governed by the reciprocal relationship an individual has with his/her environment. Extrapolating from his theory, a few researchers have proposed mechanisms of bullying victimization by employing an ecological model whereby adolescent development is influenced by both their proximal environment and other environmental contexts including fluid interactions with parents, peers, teachers, and the school climate [55, 56]. Bullying victimization can thus be best understood within this framework.

The central features of ecological perspectives are four different ecological levels of interaction: (i) microsystem; (ii) mesosystem; (iii) exosystem; and (iv) macrosystem [54]. The microsystem involves interactions with the individual's immediate or proximal environment. The microsystem includes patterns of activities, roles, and interpersonal relationships. Families are generally the first microsystem within which

adolescents function [54]. For instance, parents may have the closest and the greatest influence on an adolescents' behavior. The second ecological system is the mesosystem, which refers to interrelations of two or more elements within the microsystem. Harmonious relationships between parent and peers or parents and school may influence an adolescent's behavior. Thirdly, the exosystem is defined as a "system that is not in direct interaction with the developing person but has indirect effects on the person" [54, p. 26]. For instance, parents in poor neighborhoods may face greater obstacles in taking proper care of their children. If there is a lack of resources in such neighborhoods, the relationship between lack of parental support and lack of community resources may not directly affect an adolescent's behavior, but indirectly affect it. The last system is identified as the macrosystem, which includes influences by one's culture, norms, and laws of society [54]. In sum, the theory of ecology of human development has not produced one uniform set of explanations for interaction between individuals and environment. Rather, it provides many possible explanations, such as various interactions between parent, peer, school, and/or community factors from all of these ecological sources. It does, however, provide the best theoretical framework for studies on bullying victimization because it describes fluid and reciprocal interactions between peers, some of which negatively impact those in asymmetrical power relationships on campus.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

In sum, we believe that further research is necessary to better understand the etiology of bullying victimization, especially focusing on the effects of school prevention/intervention strategies and school environments on victimization. We first examine whether school safety equipment and strategies are significantly related to various types of bullying victimization. Based on the extant literature, it is expected that security guards and security equipment have significant effects on various types of bullying victimization. Second, we expect that school environments (e.g., awareness/fairness of school rules and punishment and presence of gangs and guns at school) are significant predictors of each type of victimization. Third, we examine whether individual demographic characteristics and deviant behaviors are significantly related to bullying victimization.

METHOD

Sample and Procedure

Self-reported data on bullying victimization were collected from 22,686 adolescents in the 2005/2007 school crime supplement (SCS) as a part of the National Crime Victimization Survey in the United States. SCS uses a rotating panel design of randomly selected households and is a collaborative cross-national study examining school-related victimization among school-aged adolescents to provide specific information for policymakers and practitioners. In particular, SCS is designed to examine several direct and indirect characteristics of bullying victimization and bullying victims. In addition, the SCS component asks respondents about school life, participation in extracurricular activities, access to drugs, weapon carrying, and other school-related issues. To obtain

a nationally representative sample, data were collected from school-aged adolescents (between 12 and 18 years old) who were in middle school and high school. Since the purpose of the current study is to understand school safety measures related to victimization at school, the analysis is restricted to those who were enrolled in private or public education programs during the six months prior to the interview. Therefore, a total of 12,987 students were eligible for the current study (59.3% (N=6833) in 2005 and 55.1% (N=6154) in 2007, resp.).

Dependent Variable

Even though bullying is considered an aggressive behavior [57], bullying includes more subtle patterns of violence such as taunting, teasing, name calling, and spreading rumors [13]. In line with this assumption regarding more subtle forms of bullying, a review of prior research suggested key differences between students whose bullying victimization involved physical or emotional/verbal abuse versus students who did not experience any victimization. For the purpose of the present study, therefore, bullying victimization was defined by the most widely used criteria [13]: (0) no victimization; (1) physical victimization; (2) emotional victimization; and (3) both types of victimization. Physical victimization is defined by four items: “During this school year, has any student bullied you, such as threatened you; pushed/shoved/tripped; you done anything to you against your will; and destroyed your property.” The definition of emotional victimization also comprises four items: “During this school year, has any student bullied you, such as made fun of you or called you names; spread rumors; excluded you” and “has anyone called you an insulting or bad name at school having to do

with your race, religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, and sexual orientation.” Responses for each victimization item were recorded into a categorical variable which was coded 0 if the respondent had not experienced any such victimization incidents at school, coded 1 if the respondent had experienced at least one of these physical victimization incidents at school, coded 2 if the respondent had experienced at least one of the emotional victimization incidents at school, and coded 3 if the respondent had experienced both physical and emotional victimization incidents at school. The dependent variable used in our analysis differs from that in some prior studies in that it adds both physical and emotional victimization as a separate category along with traditional categories including physical and emotional victimization. This particular process allows both physical and emotional victimization category to be compared to a reference category (i.e., none) simultaneously.

School Characteristics

The SCS records contained measures of several characteristics commonly expected to differentiate types of victimizations (see Table 1). Two groups of school security measures were supposedly related to school bullying victimization. The measured variable school security guards included whether a respondent’s school had security guards or staff/adults in the hallways. We also employed the school safety equipment measure that asked whether a respondent’s school had a metal detector, locked doors, or security cameras. Among these three items, locked doors and security cameras were selected as proxy variables for school safety equipment. The school safety measures had a dichotomous (1= yes/0= no) response.

Table 1: Survey items for measuring school and individual characteristics

Variables	Survey item(s)	Range	Cronbach's
Security guards	(1) Whether security guards or staff/adults are present in school?	0-1 ^a	
Security equipment I	(1) Whether school has locked door?	0-1 ^a	
Security equipment II	(1) Whether school has security cameras?	0-1 ^a	
Fairness of school rules	(1) School rules are fair, (2) same punishment for breaking rules, and (3) school rules strictly enforced	1-4 ^b	.67
Awareness of school rules	(1) Everyone knows school rules	1-4 ^b	
Awareness of punishments	(1) Students know punishments	1-4 ^b	
Gangs at school	(1) Are there any gangs at your school?	0-1 ^a	
Guns at school	(1) Have you known or seen anyone who brought a gun to school?	0-1 ^a	
Students misbehaving	(1) How often are you distracted by students misbehaving?	1-4 ^c	
Teachers' punishment	(1) How often do teachers punish students?	1-4 ^c	
Type of school	0: public, 1: private school	0-1	
School location	0: rural, 1: urban	0-1	
Skipping class	(1) Have you skipped classes?	0-1 ^a	
Fighting last 6 months	(1) Have you been in a fight during the last 6 months?	0-1 ^a	

Teacher-student relationship	(1) Teachers treat students with respect (2) Teachers care about students	1–4 ^b	.80
Extracurricular activities	(1) During the last school year, have you participated in any of the following extracurricular activities sponsored by your school such as athletics, spirit groups, arts, academics, school governments, service clubs, or other school activities?	0–1 ^a	
GPA	1: F, 2: D, 3: C, 4: B, and 5: A	1–5	
Age	Respondent age at the time of survey	12–18	
Race	0: white, 1: Nonwhite	0–1	
Ethnicity	0: non-hispanic, 1: hispanic	0–1	
Sex	0: female, 1: male	0–1	
Year	0: 2005, 1: 2007	0–1	

In addition to school safety measures, we employed school climate measures including fairness of school rules, awareness of school rules, and awareness of school punishment. Three items were combined to measure fairness of school rules: “School rules are fair”; “Same punishment for breaking rules”; and “School rules strictly enforced” (see Table 1). It is expected that students who believe that school rules are fairly and strictly administrated will be less likely to have bullying victimization than other students who distrust school’s discipline management [53]. For further analysis, the average scores were calculated based on these three items so that the higher scores indicate that students think school rules/punishments are trustworthy and fair. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach’s α) for fairness of school rules was 0.67. The variable awareness of school rules asked whether “everyone knows school rules,” and awareness of punishments asked whether “students know the punishment.” Each item had a four-point Likert-scale response ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Previous research on bullying victimization found that school-related variables, such as students misbehaving, gangs at school, guns at school, types of school, and school location, were associated with bullying victimization [17]. In particular, it is hypothesized that such school environment including students misbehaving, gangs or guns at school are positively related to each type of victimization. To examine the effects of school-related characteristics on victimization, we used three variables: students misbehaving, gangs at school, and guns at school. A single item is used to measure fellow students’ misbehavior at school: “How often are you distracted from doing your schoolwork by students misbehaving.” The response options for the item ranged from 1 = never, 2 = Almost never, 3 = sometimes, and 4 = most of the time. Gangs at school (“Are there any gangs at your school?”) and guns at school (“Do you know any students who have brought a gun to your school during this school year?”) were coded into a binary variable (1= yes/0= no). In addition, since public schools and schools located in urban areas may have a higher percentage of bullying victimization compared with their counterparts (i.e., private schools and rural areas) [21], types of school (1 = private and 0 = public) and school location (1 = urban and 0 = rural) were also included in the model in order to control the potential intervening effects of type of school and school location on bullying victimization.

Individual Characteristics

Because prior research indicates that some social-demographic individual characteristics are significant predictors of bullying victimization, we examine whether age, gender, household income, race/ethnicity, deviant behaviors, academic performance, and extracurricular activities are significantly related to bullying victimization. Age is an interval level variable, ranging from 12 to 18 years old. Sex is a dichotomous variable, coding male as 1 and female as 0. Race is also a dichotomous variable with nonwhite as 1 and white as 0. Ethnicity is a dummy variable, coding Hispanic as 1 and non-Hispanic as 0.

Additional measures of individual characteristics were skipping class and fighting in the last 6 months; all were dichotomous variables coded 1 for yes and 0 for no. A single item, “During this school year, across all subjects have you gotten mostly?,” was used to measure students’ school performance, and the response options were 1 = F; 2 = D; 3 = C; 4 = B; and 5 = A. The SCS also measured students’ participation in extracurricular activities consisting of items asking, “Have you participated in athletic teams, spirit groups (e.g., cheerleading or pep club), performing arts, academic clubs, or student government?,” which we coded as Extra-Curricular Activities(1 = yes/0 = no). (In order to check for any possible multicollinearity (MC) problems among independent and control variables, the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance statistics were calculated. Results confirmed that there was no severe MC problem among those variables (VIF < 1.46, tolerance > 0.69). Thus, the current study simultaneously included all available school safety and socioeconomic variables as well as control variables in the regression models).

Analytic Strategy

Since the primary dependent variable was a nominal variable with four discrete categories (i.e., consisting of unordered categories of no bullying, physical bullying, verbal bullying, and both physical and verbal bullying victimization), a multinomial logistic model (MNL) was used to estimate the effects of school safety variables on school bullying victimizations. The MNL is preferable to binary logistic regression analysis because it takes account of the unordered nature of the dependent variable and provides more efficient estimations by producing multiple logits simultaneously [58]. Missing values (data) are important because the improper handling of missing