

Relationship Among Parent Involvement, Perceptions of School Climate and Victimization

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INTRODUCTION

- **Victimization** is a pervasive problem facing schools today. Recent estimates in the US suggest that 8.4% (Nansel, et al., 2001) to 20% (Limber & Small, 2000) of students are victimized by bullies several times per week.
- The extant literature on **school climate** has focused on perceptions of individuals inside the school. However, the literature investigating parent perceptions of school climate is limited.
- Griffith (1996) found that parents who had negative perceptions of school climate were more likely to be involved in their child's education. Thus, negative school climate sends a message that parents are needed.
- **Parent involvement** in education has been consistently linked to positive student outcomes. Interestingly, research conducted by Watkins (2001) suggests that parents of low achieving students are more involved in their child's education than parents of students achieving at or above grade level.

• Taken together, the school climate and parent involvement literature suggests that *parents are likely to become involved when they perceive problems with their child's education.*

• **The purpose of this study** is to examine the relationship between parent perceptions of their child's victimization, parental perceptions of school climate, and reported parental involvement in school activities.

• **Hypothesis 1:** parents who perceive their child as a victim will differ from parents who do not perceive their child as a victim with regard to perceptions of school climate and involvement in school activities. Specifically, parents who perceive their child as a victim will have more negative perceptions of school climate and report higher levels of involvement in their child's education.

• **Hypothesis 2:** parent reported involvement in school activities will be related to perceptions of school climate. Specifically, parents who endorse negative perceptions of school climate will be more involved in school activities.

PARTICIPANTS: Students

• Data were collected in the spring of 2004 from sixth-, seventh-, and eight-grade students and parents at three different Midwestern Middle Schools.

• 60 students whose parents also participated in the study were selected for this study out of a pool of 438 students who participated in a larger study.

• Grade, gender, & racial distribution: 62% female and 38% male; 28% 6th-, 40% 7th-, and 32% 8th-grade; 81% Caucasian, 5% African American; 2% Latino; 2% Asian; 2% Eastern European; 5% Mixed Minority; 3% Other.

• Bully/Victim Status: 10% bully, 32% victim, 32% bully-victim, 25% bystander, 2% not involved.

PARTICIPANTS: Parents

• 59 parents who also had a child participant were selected for this study out of a pool of 80 parents. One parent had two children participating in the study and filled out the measures twice.

• Age distribution: 15% aged 26-35; 58.3% aged 36-45; 20% aged 46-55; 3.3% aged 56-65; 3.3% did not report.

• Gender distribution: 91.7% female and 8.3% male.

• Racial distribution: 88.3% Caucasian/white; 5% African American/black; 1.7% Latino/Hispanic; 1.7% Asian/Asian American; 3.3% mixed minority.

• Retrospective Self-Reported Bully/Victim Distribution from when parents were in school: 1.8% Bully; 12.3% Victim; 22.8% Bully-Victim; 26.3% Bystander; 36.8% Not Involved.

MEASURES

• **The Bully Survey-Student Version (BYS-S)** Swearer, 2001., is a four part survey that queries students regarding their experiences with bullying, perceptions of bullying, and attitudes toward bullying. Bullying is defined as: **"Anything from teasing, saying mean things, or leaving someone out of a group to physical attacks (hitting, pushing, kicking) where one person or a group of people picks on another person over a long time. Bullying refers to things that happen in school but can also include things that happen on the school grounds or going to and from school."**

• **Thoughts About Your School (TAS, Swearer & Song, 1999)** The TAS Scale is a thirteen item scale with four subfactors: social support, academic support, bullying support and conflict. This scale is based on a previous instrument (Kasen, Johnson, & Cohen, 1990) that describes aspects of school climate hypothesized to be relevant to students' emotional and behavioral development. Participants are asked to rate each item in terms of how they think it reflects their school on a four point scale from 1 = "Totally False" to 4 = "Totally True." The scale consist of items such as "Teachers ask student for their thoughts about assignments and projects." Higher scores indicate a more positive perception of school climate. In the present study, the internal consistency reliability using coefficient alpha was .75 and .60 for parent and student scales respectively.

• **Parent Involvement Scale**, adapted from the School Climate Scale- Parent Version (Emmons, Haynes, & Comer, 2002). Participants are asked to rate descriptive statements about their involvement with their child's school on a 4 item Likert scale from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 5 = "Strongly Agree." The scale consists of items such as "I often visit my child's school". Higher scores indicate higher levels of participation. The internal consistency for this study was .60 for the total score.

Figure 1: Student and parent TAS scores based on student reported victim status and parent perceived victim status

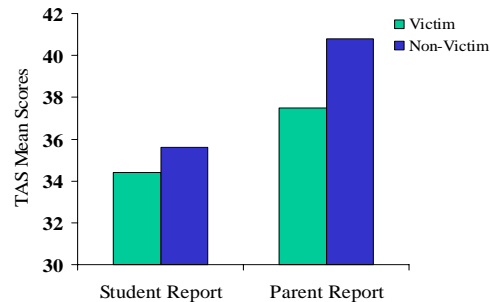


Figure 2: Independent Samples T-Test for Parent TAS scores

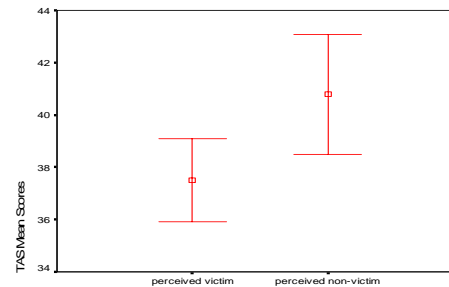
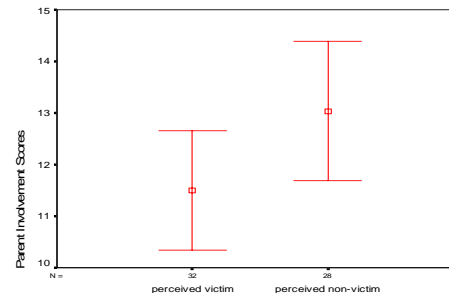


Figure 3: Independent Samples T-Test for Parent PI scores



RESULTS

• 53% of parents reported that their child was victimized while 64% of students reported being victimized as either a pure victim or bully-victim.

• Both student victims ($M = 34.4$) and parents who perceive their child as a victim ($M = 37.5$) reported lower perceptions of school climate compared to student non-victims and parents who perceived their child as a non-victim. See Figure 1.

• A one-way MANOVA was conducted to determine if perceived victimization has an effect on school climate and parent involvement. Significant differences were found, $F(2, 57) = 4.147, p < .05$.

• An independent samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the specific effects of perceived victimization on school climate and parent involvement.

• Parents who perceived their child as victimized ($M = 37.5, SD = 4.41$) on average reported lower perceptions of school climate than parents who perceived their child as a non-victim ($M = 40.79, SD = 5.9$), $t(58) = -2.462, p .05$. See Figure 2.

• The effects of perceived victimization on parent involvement was not significant, $t(58) = -1.78, p > .05$. See Figure 3.

• A simple linear regression determined that 10% of the variability in perception of school climate is accounted for by perceived victimization, $F(2, 57) = 3.293, p < .05$.

• A Pearson's correlation was conducted to determine whether parent reported involvement in school activities was related to perceptions of school climate. The results were not significant $r(60) = .162, p > .05$.

DISCUSSION

• Descriptive statistics suggest that parents tend to underreport or are unaware of their child's victimization and tend to report higher perceptions of school climate overall compared to student report.

• Parents have a more positive perception of school climate when they perceive their child is not being victimized.

• No significant differences were found in level of involvement between parents who do and do not perceive their child as a victim.

• Contrary to previous research, this study found no significant correlation between parents' perception of school climate and their level of participation.

• These results indicate that perceived victimization is an important factor in parental perceptions of school climate. While no significant results were found with respect to parent involvement, visual inspection of the data indicates that parents who perceive their child as a non-victim, *tend* to report more involvement in school.

• Additional research is needed to investigate the role of parent involvement in perceived victimization.

LIMITATIONS

• Small sample size of parents matched to students. Future studies should include a larger sample in order to decrease the standard error.

• The measures used in this study were self-report. While research has illustrated the accuracy of this method, future research utilizing multiple informants might further validate or enhance these findings.

• The Parent Participation Scale is a subset of another scale and has a relatively low alpha in this sample. Future research using additional measures of parent participation will be important.