

ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTION OF VIOLENCE, WELL-BEING, SATISFACTION AT SCHOOL, AND TEACHERS SUPPORT

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Abstract: *Adolescents involved in school violence, as bullies, victims or bystanders, experience problems in multiple areas. They reported lower life satisfaction and psychological well-being and others unfavourable consequences. This study aims to analyse relationships between perception of violence, well-being, satisfaction at school, and teachers support, using a correlational approach. The findings show that the reported well-being (mental and social), school satisfaction, student grades and teachers' support are directly associated. Aggression, victimization, indirect exposure to violence and violence in the community are negatively associated with teachers' support. Satisfaction at school can be explained by gender, student-teacher relationships, student form-teacher relationship and violence in community. Adolescents' social well-being is poor explained by investigated variables. Mental well-being, expressed by negative indicators, may be explained by father education level, age, student-teacher relationships, student form-teacher relationship and violence in community.*

Keywords: *satisfaction at school; students-teacher's relationships; well-being, violence;*

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a period of life characterized by changes in pleasure seeking and reward processing, intensification of emotional experiences and decision-making, organization, and impulse control. Adolescents' thinking about present and the future evolving and these changes affect the perception of risk, as increasing self-harm or socially disruptive behaviours. In addition, adolescence is not only a critical stage, but it is characterized by accumulation of risks (Casey et al., 2010).

1.1. School violence

Being a very public health issue, school violence, named some time bullying, is associated with direct consequences on the school environment, personal and social impacts for students (Flynn, McDonald, D'Alonzo, Vicky Tam & Wiebe, 2018). Past and recent studies found that adolescents who are involved in school violence experiences problems in multiple areas, as family, peer group, school, and neighbourhood or community (Swearer & Espelage, 2004). Victimization, violent behaviour and exposure to violence at school are associated (Flannery, Wester, & Singer, 2004).

Some studies showed an association between being a victim of bullying and lower health, poor quality of life, symptoms of depression and a lower self-esteem (Van Ouytsel, Ponnet, & Walrave, 2017) higher odds of physical relationship abuse, low school satisfaction (Rivara & le Menestrel, 2016). Contrary, lower odds of adolescent relationship abuse are associated with increased school connectedness, caring relationships with adults and perceived safety in school (Jain et al., 2018). The victims of school violence reported emotional instability, lower energy and vitality, limitations in physical activities, lower psychological wellbeing (Analitis et al., 2009). They are more anxious compared with not bullied students (Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Sink, & Birchmeier 2009; Frisén &

Bjarnelind, 2010; Foody, Samara, & O'Higgins 2017). Recent findings indicate that victimization was positively associated with aggression and internalizing symptoms, and negatively with self-esteem and future optimism (Evans, Smokowski, Rose, Mercado-Crespo, & Marshall, 2018).

The violent behaviour has been investigated in associations with individual characteristics (gender, age, personality traits, and education level), family's socio-economic status, and school location. Many studies reported that boys are more likely to engage in bullying than girls (Steward, 2008; Varjas et al., 2009), while others indicated a little gender difference in relational aggression (Goldstein, Young, A., & Boyd, 2008). A decrease of school violence is reported with age (Rivara & le Menestrel, 2016; Flannery et al., 2004), and from the early to the middle stage of adolescence (Troop-Gordon, 2017). Researchers found that the frequency of violence increases during middle school years and decreases during high school years. Middle school students are more likely than elementary school students to experience violence and perceive their school as unsafe (Dinkes, Kemp, Baum, & Snyder, 2009) but there are the opposite results (Varjas, et al., 2009). Other studies showed that the majority of schools across country experience different levels of violence (Flynn et al., 2018). In a multilevel study of socio-economic inequality and school violence among youth, findings indicated that youth from families of low socio-economic status reported becoming frequently a bullying victim (Due et al., 2009).

The perpetrators of school violence are irritable, have frequently a negative mood and lower life satisfaction, have difficulties in emotional regulation and impulse control (Foody, Samara, & O'Higgins, 2017; Kerestes, 2006; Flannery et al., 2004).

Psychological well-being is defined as satisfaction or desirable state of being happy and health and is considered a component of quality of life (Borgonovi & Pal, 2016). Well-being is associated with strength of personality, and an optimistic self-concept and self-esteem (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014). The well-being in school is related to achievement motivation, perseverance, and can predict academic performance (Cocoradă, Fărcaș & Orzea, 2018; Soutter, 2011) and can be predicted by relationships with teachers (Ratnik, & Rützel, 2017).

Satisfaction with school seems to be higher in the older age group (Ratnik & Rützel, 2017). Some studies suggest that school satisfaction is directly related to satisfaction with teachers and classmates, but is poorly associated with general life satisfaction (Casas, Balțătescu, Bertran, Gonzalez, & Hatos, 2012). Well-being, aggression behaviours and victimization correlate negatively, while social support and satisfaction at school correlate positively (Alcantara et al, 2017). Past and recent studies show that the higher quality of teacher-student relationships can predict lower levels of violence and is associated with a greater subjective well-being (Suldo, Friedrich, White, Farmer, Minch, & Michalowski, 2009).

School violence affects one in three children in US (Smokowski, & Kopasz, 2005). The prevalence rates for traditional violence in school are higher than cyber bullying, and the both are highly correlated (Rivara & le Menestrel, 2016). Differences between countries in the prevalence of victims of bullying have also been found in studies. It has been argued that these differences may be attributed to cultural and social differences and distinct implementation of policies and programs related to bullying prevention (Craig et al., 2009).

In this context, our research aims to analyse relationships between well-being, social status, school satisfaction, violence, gender, academic outcomes and student-teacher relationships among Romanian adolescents in the urban area. The frame for the analyses is the ecological model that presents the interplay of individual and contextual factors: micro level (school connectedness, and school environment), meso level (teacher involvement), and

exo level - (exposure to violence, neighbourhood environment) (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; La Salle, Meyers, Varjas, & Roach, 2015).

2. Methods

To achieve proposed objectives, we have designed a quantitative study.

2.1. Hypotheses

The research hypotheses are as follows: (H1) reported well-being (mental and social), school satisfaction, student grades, and violence are associated; (H2) well-being, school satisfaction, student grades, and violence vary according to gender; and (H3) well-being and satisfaction at school can be explained by student-related variables, family, teachers relationships and violence in school and community.

2.2. Tools

Six scales are used to validate the research hypotheses.

The Well-Being Scale (Birlleson, 1980) contains 18 items, measured on a 4-point Likert-type scale (1 = almost never to 4 = almost always). The factorial analysis identified two factors: (i) Well-being positive indicators (regarding joy, enthusiasm and positive social relations with $\alpha = 0.93$ for 10 items) and (ii) Well-being negative indicators (regarding crying, loneliness, sadness or physiological ailment, with $\alpha = 0.89$ for seven items). The first factor explains 70% of the variance, the second – 30% (Cocoradă, Fărcaș, & Orzea, 2018).

School Satisfaction Scale (experiencing positive emotions, school belonging) contains eight items and has a good internal consistency (alpha Cronbach coefficient = .88). Examples of items: 'I'm happy to go to school.' and 'I like school.'

Student-Teacher Relationships Scale (admiration for the professionalism of teachers, valorization of students by their teachers, attractiveness of teaching hours) includes 14 items and a higher alpha Cronbach coefficient (.92).

Scale of Headmaster's Involvement in School Life (headmaster involved in school life, available for students) contains seven items and has a good alpha Cronbach coefficient (.87).

Student-Form Teacher Relationships Scale (empathy, involvement in solving students' socio-emotional problems) include seven items and has a good alpha Cronbach coefficient (.86). The last four scales have the items measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *totally untrue*) to 5 = *totally true*). They have been extracted from the School Climate Questionnaire - SCQ (Cocoradă, Cazan & Orzea, 2018).

School Violence Questionnaire - SVQ (Cocoradă & Cazan, 2013) contains 21 items, measured on a 4-point Likert-type scale (1 = *almost never* to 4 = *almost always*). The items regard the presence of different violent behaviours in the last 4 weeks. SVQ has four scales: Others Aggression (7 items and Cronbach coefficient = .84), Victimization (5 items and Cronbach coefficient = .73), Indirect Exposure to Violence (6 items and Cronbach coefficient = .82). All these scales regard verbal and physical altercations in school settings. Perception of Verbal Violence in the Community contains 3 items (i.e. 'How polite are the individuals in ...') and have an acceptable alpha Cronbach coefficient (.69).

Socio-demographic questions regard age, gender, school level, school grades in the semester prior to the survey. All data has been collected by the author. Tools were administrated in pencil-paper format, during the school day, after the oral informed consent of school manager and students. The participation was anonymous and unpaid.

2.3. Participants

The conventional sample comprise 289 students, girls (56.1%) and boys, mean age 16.8 (SD = 1.22). They are enrolled in secondary education, in urban area.

3. Findings

To test the first hypothesis we computed the Pearson correlation between the investigated variables (table 1).

Table 1. Correlations between the investigated variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Others aggressions	1												
2. Victimization	.698**	1											
3. Indirect exposure to violence	.510**	.512**	1										
4. Violence in school (total score)	.863**	.825**	.847**	1									
5. Verbal violence in the community	.209**	.238**	.209**	.257**	1								
6. Student-teacher relationships	.001	.013	-.104	-.059	-.270**	1							
7. Student form-teacher relationships	-.167**	-.132*	-.263**	-.242**	-.278**	.592**	1						
8. Headmaster involvement	-.069	-.019	.171**	-.114	.236**	.831**	.510**	1					
9. Teachers' involvement (total score)	-.066	-.042	.189**	.136*	.329**	.971**	.693**	.914**	1				
10. Grades mean in the research previous semester	.161**	.090	.144*	.174**	.133*	.09	.09*	.056	.091*	1			
11. Social well-being	-.069	-.085	-.026	.064	.205**	.071	.148**	.073	.102*	.184**	1		
12. Mental well-being (negative indicators)	.050	.043	.072	.064	.151*	.225**	-.065	.174**	.166**	-.088	-.490**	1	

13. Satisfaction at school	<i>.143</i>	<i>.183</i>	<i>.255</i>	<i>.232</i>	<i>.308</i>	<i>.665</i>	<i>.501</i>	<i>.571</i>	<i>.671</i>	<i>.08</i>	<i>.116</i>	<i>.08</i>	1
	*	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**		*	<i>.07</i>	

Note: * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Coefficients in italic fonts are identified between the scales of the same tool.

To verify the second hypothesis, we use the test *t*. Results show gender statistically significant differences only for violence, the scores being higher for boys compared with girls, and satisfaction with school, which girls score higher. For the most part of the significant differences, the effect size is medium, with the exception of satisfaction at school, having a small effect size (Table 2).

Table 2. Gender differences

	Gender	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	p	Cohen's d
Others aggression	M	9.96	3.95	2.87	.002	.37
	F	8.72	2.70			
Victimization	M	6.79	2.52	3.5	.001	.44
	F	5.85	1.64			
Indirect exposure to violence	M	10.18	3.99	2.56	.01	.32
	F	9.00	3.44			
<i>Violence in school (total score)</i>	M	27.04	9.02	3.56	<.001	.46
	F	23.45	6.46			
Violence in the community	M	8.25	1.96	2.84	.01	.35
	F	7.54	2.14			
Satisfaction at school	M	20.07	6.71	1.967	.05	.18
	F	21.26	6.64			

To test the third hypothesis, the three hierarchic regressions are computed for the three dependent variables, using a set of variables organized in four blocks: 1. age, gender; 2. age, gender, mother and father education level; 3. age, gender, mother and father education level, others aggression, victimization, exposure to violence, violence in community. For the 4th model, we added student-teacher relationships, student-form teacher relationship, headmaster involvement (Table 3). Although the regression models for mental well-being and social well-being are statistically significant, the variables used explain only 13% and 6%, respectively, of the total variance.

Table 3. Regression for variable well-being and satisfaction at school

	Dependent variables		
	Mental well-being	Social well-being	Satisfaction at school
<i>Models Summary</i>			
R	.37	.34	.69
R ²	.14	.11	.48
Δ R ²	.13	.06	.47
F and sig. F change	20.07***	4.05**	129.12***

<i>Independent variables for 4th model</i>	β	t	β	t	β	t
Gender	.001	.015	-.033	-.76	.07	1.97*
Age	-.08	-1.93*	.234	5.5**	-.015	-.45
Mother education level	.03	.597	.057	1.13	.014	.36
Father education level	-.09	-1.98*	.026	.53	-.026	-.69
Others aggression	-.01	-.182	-.021	-.35	.013	.3
Victimization	-.02	-.358	-.07	-1.11	-.05	-1.17
Indirect exposure to violence	.02	.39	.081	1.58	-.066	-1.68
Violence in community	-.13	-2.9**	-.150	-3.4**	-.080	-2.34*
Student-teacher relationships	.40	5.2***	-.041	-.526	.509	8.49**
Student form-teacher relationship	-.29	-5.45**	.16	3.01**	.13	3.2**
Headmaster involvement	-.007	-.01	.03	.39	.07	1.28

Note: * sig. < .05; **; sig. < .01; *** sig. < .001

4. Discussions and conclusion

This paper presents the relationships between well-being, school satisfaction, violence, gender, and student-teacher relationships among adolescents, using the framework of the ecological model. The more findings are convergent with other studies, another are divergent.

4. 1. Significant correlations

Our study confirms the association between the violent behaviour, victimization and exposure to violence in school and high perception of violence in community as past researches (i.e. Varjas et al., 2009). In other words, being victim or bystander at violence may be intensifying aggressive behaviour (Flannery et al., 2004). The violence perpetrators obtain poor grades and have lower satisfaction at school. Students that report higher victimization have lower satisfaction at school convergent with recent studies (e.g. Foody et al., 2017). In the Romanian sample, they have poor relationships with their form-teacher. Probably these adolescents are weak interpersonal relationships, negative emotions and feel themselves lonely (Lennarz et al., 2016).

The students that report a good teachers' involvement in school life report lower school violence, and higher social well-being and satisfaction at school. In line with other studies, we can highlight that the students' well-being is affected by the school's social support (e.g. Alcantara et al, 2017). The students that reported mental problems (as stomach pain, tendency to cry, nightmares, or the impulse to run away from home) have a higher perception of violence in community, lower social well-being and poor grades. They reported good relationships with their form-teachers. We must highlight the special position of the form-teachers in the Romanian school: they provide emotional support for students, help them overcome some problems, and are an interface between students and other teachers. In some cases, they can contribute to the attenuation of student-parent conflicts (M. E. C. I., 2009).

Scholl satisfaction is lower for the students being violence perpetrators, victims and bystander, but is higher for the students that declare them having higher social well-being. Unexpected, school satisfaction and students' grades is not associated.

4.2. Gender differences

Gender differences concern all dimensions of violence: male students report more aggressions, victimizations, indirect exposure to violence, and perception of violence in community. Female students obtain higher scores only to school satisfaction confirming others studies, but not for well-being. Hypothesis concerning gender-related perception of student-teachers relationships is not supported by the data.

4.3. Explanatory variables for well-being and satisfaction at school

Mental well-being, social well-being and satisfaction at school can be explained in various proportions by the different students' and environment traits. Mental well-being is explained, in our study, by student-teacher relationships, student form-teacher relationship and perception of the violence in community. Social well-being is few explained by age, perception of the violence in community and student form-teacher relationship. Regarding the students social well-being, it is reasonable to assume that there exist other variables which are not been included in the model, such as relationships with colleagues and parents, or personality traits.

Satisfaction at school is explained by student-teacher relationships, followed by the student form-teacher relationship, and gender. Perception of the higher violence in community negatively influences students' satisfaction at school.

The perception of verbal violence in community is present, as predictor, in all forms of well-being, general and at school. Concluding, it can be seen that well-being and satisfaction at school are explained by the individual and contextual factors that belong to the micro-, meso- and macro- levels, according to the ecological model.

Although they bring new information, these results should be viewed with caution: the data collection is done through self-reports and can be biased by social desirability and self-awareness deficiencies. The comparisons with others studies may be difficult because they differ with regard to the reference period used in measuring violence (last four, last six weeks, last month, last 12 months etc.). The well-being is by excellence subjective and the participants responses depend on personal standards and perceptions of school and life experiences.

4.4. Conclusion

The findings confirm the connection between subjective well-being, school satisfaction, violence, and student-teacher relationships. These findings are important to design public policies at interventions in violence diminishing and well-being and school satisfaction increasing in adolescence. To increase the school satisfaction for learners should pay attention to the support of significant adults in school life, teachers, and form-teachers and to the headmaster involvement in school life.

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