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The Parent-Child Relationship and Parental Involvement in School Life as Protective Factors for Bullying and Victimization

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Introduction

- Bullying has been recognized as a major problem due to its high prevalence rate and the long-term negative impact it can have on those who are victimized and those who bully¹.
- Although we know that parenting practices are directly associated with child outcomes, there is limited research on the relationship between involvement in bullying and the home environment².
- Children who have negative relationships with parents may lack opportunities to develop the relationship competencies required to develop healthy friendships and may consequently be at risk for involvement in bullying³.
- Children who bully have more school-related problems than children who are not involved in bullying^{4,5}. Children whose parents have a positive relationship with the school, such as involvement in school life have fewer school-related problems and increased school achievement⁶. Parental involvement in school life may therefore predict children's problems in school, and consequently also predict involvement in bullying.

Objectives:

- The purpose of this study is to examine the protective role of parents in bullying and victimization. The two parent roles examined in this study are children's perceptions of their relationship with their parent and parental involvement in the child's school life
- Given that parents play an influential role in children's development, we predict that having negative perceptions of the parent-child relationship and parental involvement in school life will result in high rates of bullying and victimization.

Measures

Demographics	Age, gender, grade, socioeconomic status ⁷
Parental Involvement in School Life ($\alpha = .85$)	1. If I have a problem in school, my parents are ready to help. 2. My parents are willing to come to school to talk teachers. 3. My parents encourage me to do well at school. 4. My parents are interested in what happens to me at school. 5. My parents are willing to help me with my homework.
Quality of Parent-Child Relationship ($\alpha = .80$)	1. My parents understand me. 2. My parents expect too much of me. 3. My parents trust me. 4. I have a lot of arguments with my parents. 5. My parents expect too much of me at school.
Bullying & Victimization	Students were asked nine questions about verbal, physical, social, ethnic, cyber and sexual forms of bullying and victimization, and one question about the overall frequency of bullying and victimization over the past couple of months. A composite score on bullying was created by summing the ten bullying behaviour items ($\alpha = .87$). A composite score on victimization was created by summing the ten victimization items ($\alpha = .86$).

Methods

Procedure

- Analyses were conducted using data collected through the Health Behaviours of School-Aged Children survey (World Health Organization, 2006).
- Data were collected in the 2005/2006 school year.

Participants

- Participants were 8,538 students, 3971 males and 4565 females in grades 6-10 from across Canada.

Data Analyses

- Hierarchical Multiple Regression analyses were conducted separately for bullying and victimization outcomes.
- To control for the effects of grade, socioeconomic status (SES), and sex these variables were added in the first step of the model. Where bullying was the outcome, victimization was controlled for in the first step of the model, and vice versa.
- Simple slope analyses were used to interpret all significant interactions⁸.

Results

Outcome: Bullying

Predictor	B (SE)	ΔF^2	P
Step 1			
Grade	.13 (0.03)		<.001
SES	.02 (0.06)	.72	
Sex (1 = boy; 2 = girl)	-.85 (0.08)	<.001	
Victimization	.30 (0.01)	<.001	
Step 2			
Parental Involvement	-.07 (0.04)	.09	
Parent-child Relationship	-.18 (0.04)	<.001	
Grade x Parental Involvement	-.01 (0.01)	.44	
Grade x Parent-child Relationship	.01 (0.01)	.33	
SES x Parental Involvement	-.05 (0.02)	.02	
SES x Parent-child Relationship	-.03 (0.02)	.09	
Gender x Parental Involvement	.02 (0.03)	.40	
Gender x Parent-child Relationship	.05 (0.02)	.04	
Parental Involvement x Parent-child Relationship	-.01 (0.003)	<.01	

Main effects

- Being younger, male, and having a history of victimization predicted increased bullying behaviour.
- Having a positive parent-child relationship predicted decreased bullying behaviour.

Interactions

- Parental Involvement had a stronger buffering effect for students with high SES than low SES.
- Quality of the parent-child relationship had a stronger buffering effect for girls than boys.
- Quality of the parent-child relationship had a stronger buffering effect for students with high levels of parental involvement than students with low levels of parental involvement.

Results

Outcome: Victimization

Predictor	B (SE)	ΔF^2	P
Step 1			
Grade	-.46 (0.04)	.17	<.001
SES	-.25 (0.08)		<.01
Sex (1 = boy; 2 = girl)	.36 (.11)		<.01
Bullying	.53 (.01)		<.001
Step 2			
Parental Involvement	-.23 (0.06)		<.001
Parent-child Relationship	-.11 (0.05)	.02	
Grade x Parental Involvement	.02 (0.01)	.22	
Grade x Parent-child Relationship	.03 (0.01)	<.01	
SES x Parental Involvement	.09 (0.03)	<.001	
SES x Parent-child Relationship	-.05 (0.02)	.02	
Gender x Parental Involvement	.13 (0.04)	<.01	
Gender x Parent-child Relationship	-.05 (0.03)	.05	
Parental Involvement x Parent-child Relationship	.02 (0.003)	<.001	

Main effects

- Being younger and male predicted increased victimization.
- Having a positive parent-child relationship and high parental involvement predicted decreased victimization.

Interactions

- Quality of the parent-child relationship had the strongest buffering effect for students in grade 10, followed by students in grade 6, 9, 7, then 8.
- Parental Involvement had the strongest buffering effect for students with medium SES.
- Quality of the parent-child relationship had the strongest buffering effect for students with high SES.
- Parental involvement and quality of the parent-child relationship had a stronger buffering effect for girls than boys.
- Quality of the parent-child relationship had a stronger buffering effect for students with high levels of parental involvement than students with low levels of parental involvement.

Conclusions

- Parents can play an important role in protecting their children from bullying and victimization.
- The quality of the parent-child relationship and parental involvement in school life play differential roles in protecting against bullying and victimization. Although the quality of the parent-child relationship is important as a protective factor for both bullying and victimization, parental involvement in school life is especially needed to protect against victimization.
- The protective role of parents may be a stronger buffer against bullying and victimization for girls and children with high SES.

Implications

- Educating parents on how to effectively communicate with their children is an important factor to consider in bullying prevention and intervention programming.
- Schools need to actively engage parents in their child's school life. Strategies such as teaching parents how to help with their child's homework, support their child's school activities, and improve parent-teacher communications may help to increase parental involvement.

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