

# Effects of Student Participation & Teacher Support on Victimization in School

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## Abstract

This study examines associations between Student Participation in Decision-Making in their Schools, Teacher Support, and Student Victimization (by students and staff members) in a nationally representative sample of junior high and high schools in Israel. Data were analyzed using structural equations modeling. Across all models, higher levels of teacher support were associated with lower rates of victimization (for both students and teachers). Participation in Decision-Making was related to Victimization, with varying patterns depending on students' gender and ethnicity. Implications for theory and practice are discussed in the full paper available @ [http://hhd.csun.edu/marachi/Student\\_Vict.pdf](http://hhd.csun.edu/marachi/Student_Vict.pdf)

## Rationale & Purpose

### Current Violence Prevention Efforts

- Based on "Student deficit" models
- Acontextual with respect to schools
- Teachers and larger social context of schools ignored

### Authoritarian – Democratic climate

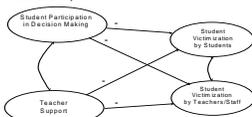
Participatory climate in 'democratic' classrooms linked to more engagement, less disruption than authoritarian classrooms (Hyman & Snook, 2000).

### Teacher Support

- Positive student-teacher relationships important for effective learning and behavior in schools (Baker, 1998; Battistich et al., 1997; Hodings, 1998, 1992).

## Research Questions

- Does student participation in decision-making in school relate to lowered rates of student victimization (by students and staff?)
- Do student perceptions of teacher support relate to lowered rates of victimization (by students and staff?)



## Methods

- Data from subset of National Study of School Violence in Israel.
- Two-stage stratified random sampling frame
- Structural Equations Modeling (Bentler, 1995) was used for full and group comparison analyses.
- Group comparisons were between Junior High/High school, Male/Female, and Jewish/Arab groups.

## Research Participants

- N = 10,254 students in 83 Junior High and 81 High Schools in Israel.

- 45% Junior High
- 64% Jewish
- 50% Female

## Procedures and Measures

- Anonymous, self-report questionnaires administered in the Fall of 2000-2001 school year.
- Questionnaires adapted from California School Climate and Safety Survey (Furlong, 1999). Original items translated from English to Hebrew and Arabic, then back translated for accuracy.
- Student Victimization by Students**  
Students were asked whether they were victims at least once in the prior month of a list of victimization items.  
**Moderate:** Threats, being kicked or punched, seized or shoved, fist fight. (5 items,  $\alpha = .80$ )  
**Severe:** Fights requiring medical attention, threats under blackmail, threatened with gun, given serious beating (7 items,  $\alpha = .82$ )
- Student Victimization by Staff** (4 items,  $\alpha = .76$ )  
Examples include being seized or shoved on purpose, receiving kick or punch from staff member, being pinched, slapped, or cursed at by staff member.
- Perceived Teacher Support of Students** (7 items,  $\alpha = .89$ )  
Ex. "My teachers respect me"  
Ex. "Teachers in this school care for the students."
- Participation in Decision-Making** (3 items,  $\alpha = .74$ )  
Ex. "In this school, students participate in making important decisions and in making the rules"

## Results

### Full Structural Equations Model

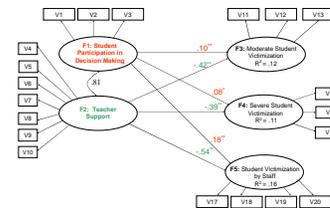


Figure 1. Overall Structural Equations Model of School Climate and Student Victimization (Full Student Dataset)  
 $\chi^2(343, N=8404) = 3,873, (p < .001)$ , NFI=.94, NNFI=.94, CFI=.95, RMSEA=.04.  
Significant paths are indicated with asterisks. \* =  $p < .01$ , \*\* =  $p < .001$ .

### Summary of Findings

- Positive teacher support had a strong, consistent association with lowered levels of student victimization (across all comparisons).
- Student Participation in Decision-Making had a slight positive association with Student Victimization.
- Gender and ethnic differences emerged in comparison models (see below). No differences were found between Junior High/High School groups.

## Discussion

- The social context of the school environment is important to consider in connection with student violence.
- Teacher support relates strongly to lowered rates of violence in all models.
- With variation across gender and cultural divisions, participation in school decision-making related to slightly increased rates of student victimization. Findings run counter to hypotheses for this variable.

## Results continued - Example of group comparison

### Cultural Comparison Model

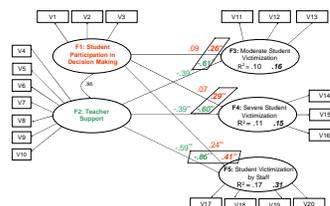


Figure 2. Cultural Comparison Structural Equation Modeling of Jewish and Arab Students' Reports of School Climate and Student Victimization.  
 $\chi^2(337, N=8404) = 4,552, (p < .001)$ , NFI=.94, NNFI=.93, CFI=.94, RMSEA=.04.  
Significant paths are indicated with asterisks. \* =  $p < .01$ , \*\* =  $p < .001$ .

\* Note: A gender comparison model was also conducted and presented in the full paper but not shown in the poster due to space limitations.

## Future Directions

- Future focus should incorporate social contexts & processes of social influence on violence and victimization.
- What cultural dynamics account for the differences in how participation may relate to victimization?
- Do similar cultural differences exist in other ethnicities/context?
- What specific aspects of teacher support are most important for maintaining student safety?