

# Effects of Teacher Avoidance of School Policies on Student Victimization

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## Abstract

This study examines relations between school policy, teacher responses to violence, and students' victimization outcomes as reported by teachers in a nationally representative sample of schools in Israel. Data were analyzed using structural equations modeling for the full sample of teachers, as well as group comparisons by school level, gender, and ethnic groups. Across all models, Violence Prevention as a Priority was significantly related to less Avoidance of Dealing with Violence. Teacher Avoidance of School Violence related strongly to elevated rates of student victimization. The full paper may be retrieved at

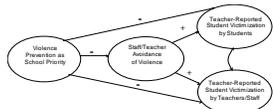
[http://hhd.csun.edu/marachi/Teacher\\_Vict.pdf](http://hhd.csun.edu/marachi/Teacher_Vict.pdf)

## Rationale & Purpose

- Prior research interviews with teachers reveal ambiguities in willingness to intervene in violence between students (Astor, 1998).
- Research suggests that teachers' perceptions of school-wide goals are strongly associated with their approaches to instruction and beliefs about their roles in student lives (Roesser, Marachi, & Gehlbach, 2001).

## Research Questions

- A. Do teachers' perceptions of a school-wide emphasis on "Violence Prevention as a Priority" relate to
- 1) Less "Avoidance of Violence" among teachers and staff in the school, and
  - 2) Lowered rates of student violence
- B. Does "Avoidance of Violence" among teachers and staff in the school relate to increased rates of violence among students?



## 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 = 898 teachers in 83 Junior High and 81 High Schools in Israel.

58% Junior High  
65% Jewish  
60% Female

## Procedures and Measures

- Anonymous, self-report questionnaires were administered to teachers in the Fall of 2000-2001 school year.
- Questionnaires were adapted from work of Astor and colleagues (Astor et al., 1997) on perceptions of school social workers on violence in their schools.

### Teacher Reports of Student Victimization (by Students)

Teachers were asked to report on the violence that occurred between students in their classrooms during the prior month.

**Moderate:** Threats, destruction of property, kicking, punching, insulting or humiliating, seizing and shoving another student. (8 items,  $\alpha = .90$ )

**Severe:** Students coming to school with weapons, gang threats toward students, blackmail, group beatings of students. (4 items,  $\alpha = .71$ )

### Violence Prevention as a Priority (6 items, $\alpha = .82$ )

Ex. "Treating violence is an important part of the school's mission."  
Ex. "There is a strong awareness towards violence prevention in my school."

### Staff Avoidance of Violence (4 items, $\alpha = .75$ )

Ex. "Most of the teachers choose to ignore violent acts that are not under their immediate responsibility"  
Ex. "The teachers tend to ignore 'low levels' of violence (e.g. shoves, threats, verbal abuse)."

## Discussion

- When teachers perceived a strong emphasis on Violence Prevention in their schools, they were *less likely* to avoid dealing with violence among students. This lowered avoidance, in turn, was related to lowered rates of student victimization.
- The findings suggest the important roles of action (or inaction) of teachers/staff when faced with violent events at school.

## Future Directions

- More research should focus on social contexts and processes connecting school climate and student violence.
- Questions for future research on school social context:

*What social elements create and sustain positive school climates?*

*What are roles, responsibilities, and actions of administrators/teachers in preventing violence?*

*Which school-based responses to violence are most effective?*

## Results

### Full Structural Equations Model

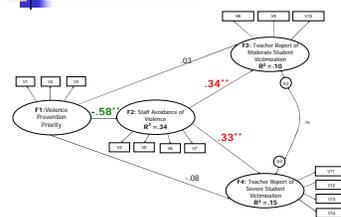


Figure 4. Overall Structural Equations Model for Teacher Reports of School Context and Student Victimization.  
 $\chi^2(70, N = 898) = 232, (p < .001)$ .  
NFI = .95, NNFI = .95, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .05.  
Significant paths are indicated with asterisks, \*\*  $p < .001$ .

### Summaries of Findings

- For full analyses and all group comparisons, results revealed the following patterns:
- Violence Prevention as a School Priority related strongly to lowered rates of Teacher Avoidance of Violence.
- Teacher Avoidance of Violence related to higher rates of Student Victimization.
- Violence Prevention as a School Priority did not have direct, significant associations with the victimization measures.
- Violence Prevention as a Priority had an indirect effect on student victimization through Staff Avoidance of Violence.