



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of School Psychology

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/jschpsyc](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jschpsyc)

## Associations between peer victimization, perceived teacher unfairness, and adolescents' adjustment and well-being

Gianluca Gini<sup>a,\*</sup>, Claudia Marino<sup>a</sup>, Tiziana Pozzoli<sup>a</sup>, Melissa Holt<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Developmental and Social Psychology, University of Padova, Italy

<sup>b</sup> School of Education, Boston University, USA

### ARTICLE INFO

Action Editor: Jina Yoon

**Keywords:**

Peer victimization  
Teacher unfairness  
Life satisfaction  
Well-being  
Sense of safety

### ABSTRACT

Negative relationships within the classroom, both with peers and teachers, can be very stressful for adolescents and are often found to be associated with a variety of negative outcomes. In this study, we investigated the concurrent role of peer victimization and perceived teacher unfairness in explaining psychosocial problems in a sample of 1378 Italian students (353 middle school students,  $M_{age} = 12.61$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ , and 1025 high school students,  $M_{age} = 14.92$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ). Structural equation modeling showed that both peer victimization and perceived teacher unfairness were positively associated with reports of more frequent psychological and somatic problems, and negatively related to satisfaction with friends and sense of safety. Only perceived teacher unfairness showed a significant association with satisfaction with school. Results of multi-group modeling demonstrated measurement invariance (total scalar invariance) across both gender and school-level groups. Some gender and school-level differences in the regression coefficients were found. In general, associations between the risk factors and adolescents' problems were stronger for girls and for higher school students. Findings confirmed that both peer victimization and perceived teacher unfairness are significant risk factors within the classroom microsystems. Implications for school psychologists are discussed.

### 1. Introduction

The classroom environment is a social setting particularly suitable for the study of social and relational adjustment and well-being of adolescents, because students spend a substantial amount of time interacting with peers and teachers in this microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Ladd, 2003). Both peers and teachers, moreover, can be influential agents in youth's development and can act as "social referents" for personal and social evaluations. That is, adolescents often use information from relationships with peers and teachers to appraise themselves, others, and the proximate social context (Chang, 2003; McAuliffe, Hubbard, & Romano, 2009). While this setting offers many cognitive and relational opportunities to students, youth can also encounter significant risk factors that might negatively influence their personal, academic, and social adjustment. Positive and supportive relationships with classmates and teachers are resources that promote successful adaptation during adolescence (Compas, Hiden, & Gerhardt, 1995). Conversely, negative relationships within the classroom can be sometimes very stressful for adolescents and difficult to cope with (Swearer & Hymel, 2015).

Although there are various theoretical models that can be used to analyze the role of quality of interpersonal relationships within the classroom in individual adjustment (Gilman, Huebner, & Furlong, 2009; Ladd, 2003; Sameroff, 1995), perhaps the most widely

\* Corresponding author at: Department of Developmental and Social Psychology, University of Padova, via Venezia 8, 35031 Padova, Italy.  
E-mail address: [gianluca.gini@unipd.it](mailto:gianluca.gini@unipd.it) (G. Gini).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2017.09.005>

Received 3 October 2016; Received in revised form 8 August 2017; Accepted 22 September 2017

0022-4405/© 2017 Society for the Study of School Psychology. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

used and known in the field of school psychology is the social ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). This approach acknowledges that youth's development, adjustment, and health risks are influenced by the contexts in which they live. In particular, an important microsystem is represented by the classroom where students closely interact with significant others, namely classmates and teachers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This approach constitutes a comprehensive theoretical framework that has been particularly useful in recent conceptualizations of negative peer relationships, including bullying and peer victimization (Espelage, 2014; Swearer & Doll, 2001), and negative teacher-student relationships, including teacher unfairness (Lenzi et al., 2014). Moreover, research on the health correlates of both these negative experiences has used social-cognitive models of stress as frameworks, which conceptualize the role of environmental stressors, together with individual characteristics, in psychopathology (Cicchetti & Toth, 1998; Lazarus, 1993).

Of course, stressors in school life co-occur and it is important to test whether the relation between a single stressful experience (e.g., being victimized by peers) and an individual's well-being hold beyond the effects of other stressors. Based on the above-mentioned theoretical frameworks, in the current study we analyzed in a single model the concurrent role of two negative experiences that students can face in their everyday lives in the classroom, namely peer victimization and unfair treatment by teachers. Both these negative relationships can communicate to adolescents' negative images about themselves, their relationships with others, and their school experience. Specifically, we tested a model in which both relational stressors independently contribute to explain a variety of problems in different domains of adolescents' lives, including personal well-being, satisfaction with friendship relationships and with school, and sense of safety at school.

### 1.1. Peer victimization and negative outcomes

Peer victimization is one of the most common problems that students experience during their school careers, especially in the middle and high school years. It is estimated that about one-third of youth are involved in some forms of victimization by peers (Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2000; Nansel et al., 2001; Storch & Ledley, 2005). Among middle and high school students, Hoover, Oliver, and Hazler (1992) found that 14% of their sample believed that being harassed by peers negatively affected one or more aspects of their adjustment. Consistent with stress-health models (Bonanno & Hymel, 2010; Flack, Salmivalli, & Idsoe, 2011; McEwen, 1998; Swearer & Hymel, 2015), research has indeed confirmed that peer victimization in schools is a stressful life experience that can have negative outcomes in several domains of students' adjustment and well-being. For instance, victimization by peers is often reported to be associated with more frequent health symptoms, such as headaches, stomachaches, muscle pains, and sleeping problems (Gini & Pozzoli, 2013; Gini, Pozzoli, Vieno, & Lenzi, 2014), and with psychological problems, including anxiety, depression, loneliness, and low self-esteem (Casper & Card, 2016; Gini, Card, & Pozzoli, 2017; Reijntjes, Kamphuis, Prinzie, & Telch, 2010; Ttoui, Farrington, Losel, & Loeber, 2011).

Based on a definition of mental health as more than the absence of psychopathological symptoms (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), adjustment and well-being should also be studied with respect to the presence of positive outcomes, rather than only focusing on health complaints and psychological problems. From the perspective of positive psychology, it is particularly important to consider life satisfaction (that is, perceived quality of life), a construct closely associated with happiness and with positive personal and social outcomes (Huebner, Gilman, & Laughlin, 1999; Lewinsohn, Redner, & Seeley, 1991). Poor life satisfaction is distinguishable from low self-esteem or depression (Huebner et al., 1999); an adolescent can be satisfied with her or his life, but concurrently experience symptomatology (Suldo & Shaffer, 2008). Key domains of life satisfaction for adolescents in particular include satisfaction with friends and school life (Gilman, Huebner, & Laughlin, 2000).

Only a few studies have analyzed the relation between peer victimization and life satisfaction in adolescents (Valois, Kerr, & Huebner, 2012; Wilkins-Shurmer et al., 2003). Given that life satisfaction is a multidimensional construct that includes different areas (Huebner et al., 1999), victimization by peers at school could be negatively associated with specific domains of life satisfaction. A study with Italian adolescents (Gini, 2008a) indeed found a negative association between peer victimization and satisfaction with friends, one of the major components of life satisfaction for adolescents (Gilman et al., 2000). However, to date no study has analyzed this association within a more articulated model where different outcomes of peer victimization are considered together.

Similarly, peer victimization could be negatively related to satisfaction with school life (e.g., liking to go to school and believing that school life is stimulating and gratifying), another domain central to adolescents' life satisfaction (Gilman et al., 2000). School plays a crucial role in addressing the basic need to experience relatedness and belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and students who are accepted by their peers at school, for example, are more likely to enjoy school and their classes (Osterman, 2000). Conversely, being victimized by peers is associated with poor academic achievement, low sense of belonging to school, and school avoidance (Buhs, 2005; Juvonen et al., 2000; Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010). However, despite the fact that school satisfaction is a relevant aspect of adolescents' quality of life, it is a rather neglected topic in peer victimization research. Nonetheless, a few studies suggest that acceptance by peers and lack of victimization are positively associated to school satisfaction (Samdal, Nutbeam, Wold, & Kannas, 1998). Conversely, middle school students who have experienced peer victimization report being less satisfied with their school lives (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002).

Finally, peer victimization may be associated with decreased feelings of safety in the school context. Even though relatively little is known about the impact of social-contextual factors on students' feelings of safety at school (Fisher, Nation, Nixon, & McIlroy, 2016), among the most likely risk factors for sense of unsafety is peer victimization, both suffered and witnessed (Boxer, Edwards-Leeper, Goldstein, Musher-Eizenman, & Dubow, 2003; Goldweber, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw, 2013; Ormerod, Collinsworth, & Perry, 2008). For example, Boxer et al. (2003) found that students who witnessed peer aggression at school reported lower perceptions of

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات