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Children's Exposure to Peer Victimization, Bullying, Perceptions of School Safety, and School Climate Among Albanian and Serbian Students in Kosovo

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CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO PEER VICTIMIZATION, BULLYING, PERCEPTIONS
OF SCHOOL SAFETY, AND SCHOOL CLIMATE AMONG
ALBANIAN AND SERBIAN STUDENTS IN KOSOVO

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
International Family and Community Studies

by
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August 2019

Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

Statistics suggest that school violence is prevalent in the Balkan region. However, the Balkan culture in general and Kosovar society in particular has paid little attention to peer victimization, bullying, school safety, and school climate considering the transitional period that society went through during the occupation and after the war. Moreover, there is no word in Albanian and Serbian language that describes bullying specifically. In order to explore the prevalence and nature of peer victimization, bullying, children's perceptions of school safety, and school climate in Kosovo, a survey with 385 participants from grades 6th through 9th will be conducted with Albanian and Serbian students.

This study used bivariate analyses to explore association between two variables (e.g., exposure to school violence and children's victimization) and analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test for group differences based on demographic items (age, gender, grade, and ethnicity) and perceptions of peer victimization, bullying, school safety, and school climate. Comparisons between Albanian and Serbian students based on age, gender, and ethnicity, and experiences of bullying were explored, while linear regression were conducted to examine the moderation in relationship between bullying and perceptions of safety and peer victimization and perceptions of safety.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Schools play a crucial role in promoting children's psychological development (Feder, Levant, & Dean, 2007). Safe schools represent a microcosm of the society in which children find themselves, and incidents of violence and peer victimization within school disrupt the purpose of education and psychological development of the children. Although schools have been found to be the safest places for youth for over a decade now (Feder et al., 2007; Musu, Zhang, Wang, Zhang, & Audekerk, 2019; Mulvey & Cauffman, 2001), numerous researchers have documented that a substantial number of youth are victimized and bullied in schools (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014; Musu, Zhang, Wang, Zhang, & Audekerk, 2019; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, & Medicine [National Academies], 2016) and that these experiences impact their cognition, social, psychological, and emotional wellbeing, including educational outcomes (National Academies, 2016). Furthermore, there is evidence that experiences of being bullied are also linked with other forms of peer victimization, bullying others, and perceptions of school safety (Astor, Guerra, & Van Acker, 2010; Goldweber, et al., 2013; Lleras, 2008).

In their meta-analysis, Gini and Pozoli (2013) documented that children who experience bullying in school setting have higher risk for mental health problems. Other studies (e.g., Flannery, Wester, & Singer, 2004; Fowler, Tompsett, Braciszewski, Jacques-Tiura, & Baltes, 2009; Stein, et al., 2003) have documented a positive relationship between school violence and being bullied with psychosomatic problems, internalizing problems, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Specifically, findings from the literature suggest that students who are exposed to peer victimization report negative physical health (Bogart et al., 2014); sleep difficulties (Hunter, et al., 2014); psycho-somatic disturbances (Ginni & Pozolli, 2013); internalizing

symptoms (e. g., depression, anxiety, and fear), and externalizing symptoms (e.g., anger, aggression, conduct problems, and alcohol and drugs; Sigurdson, et al., 2015). Further, findings show a significant negative relationship between peer victimization and academic performance, indicating that children who experience victimization are at increased risk for poor academic achievement (Beran & Lupart, 2009; Beran et al., 2008).

Despite the concern that levels of violence in schools are increasing in the U.S., results from longitudinal studies have shown that school violence and disruptions have remained fairly stable over time, and the incidence of some indicators have even decreased since the late 1980's (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004; Musu, Zhang, Wang, Zhang, & Audekerk, 2019;) including thefts, violent victimization (e.g., serious violent crimes), and serious violent victimization (e.g., rape and sexual assault). Similarly, a number of studies have documented a decline between 1995 and 2015 (Musu-Gillete et al., 2017) in children's perceptions of school violence.

Notwithstanding recent decreases in some forms of school violence, bullying and other forms of peer victimization continue to impact a significant number of children and youth. For example, Musu, Zhang, Wang, Zhang, and Oudekerk (2019) documented that in 2017 one out of every five students in the U.S. (aged 12-17) had been bullied at school in the previous year. Because of its prevalence and potentially serious consequences for children, bullying and other forms of peer victimization represent a serious problem for schools, communities, policy-makers, and the larger society (Wolke, Copeland, Angold, & Costello, 2013).

Definition of Terms

School administrators, teachers, and students use a variety of terms to describe harms that students may experience, including peer victimization, school violence, and bullying. It is

important to define these and related terms and identify similarities and differences in their constructs.

School Violence

According to Furlong and Morrison (2000), school violence refers to a complex construct that involves both criminal acts and aggression in schools, which inhibits development and learning, and harms the school's climate.

Bullying

Olweus (1978) was the first author to define and research bullying among youth. According to Olweus (1978; 1993) a person is bullied if he or she is exposed repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons. These negative actions may be both verbal (e.g. threatening, degrading, teasing) and non-verbal (e. g. hitting, kicking, slapping, pushing, vandalizing property, rude gestures, and making faces). Similarly, the Center for Disease Control (CDC; Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014) provided a uniform definition on bullying, which is very close to original definition provided by Olweus (1993) which states that

Bullying in any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance or is repeated multiple times or it is likely to be repeated. This behavior may inflict harm or distress on the person being bullied including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm (Gladden et al., 2014, p.7).

Peer Victimization

There is no clear consensus when it comes to conceptualization of peer victimization in the literature. Although some consider peer victimization synonymous with the term bullying

(Olweus, 1993), others distinguish the terms and view peer victimization as a broader concept that encompasses bullying. For example, according to Söderberg and Björkqvist (2019):

in contrast to bullying, the concept of peer victimization – defined as a situation in which someone is the target of frequent aggressive behaviors by peers (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996) – does not explicitly assume a power imbalance between perpetrator(s) and victim(s) (p. 3).

For the purpose of this study, peer victimization is defined in this broader sense and may include physical victimization, verbal victimization, social manipulation, and attack on property.

School Safety

According to Duke (2002), school safety refers to any threat to a student's wellbeing that could be self-inflicted (e.g., substance use) or imposed by others (e.g., physical assault). These threats could range from antisocial behavior, to bullying, to criminal behaviors (e.g., murder) (Rabrenovic, Kaufman, & Levin, 2004). Student's perceptions of school's safety-a focus in the current study-focuses on students' assessment of threats imposed by others.

School Climate

The most widely used definition in literature for school climate is proposed by Cohen and his colleagues (2009) which states that school climate is "based on patterns of people's experiences of school life, and reflects norms, goals, and values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures" (p. 182).

Significance of the Study

The topics of peer victimization, bulling, and children's perceptions of safety and school climate have taken a special place in public discourse and research field at national and international levels, primarily due to the findings over years that a substantial number of youth experience school violence, peer victimization, and bullying in schools and that these

experiences affect children's perceptions of school safety including psychological wellbeing and their academic performance, including communities and larger society (Musu et al., 2019; National Academies, 2016).

This research topic has also received significant attention and interest in Kosovo among educators, policymakers, and researchers in the post-war period. Although research is lacking, available findings indicate that significant numbers of Kosovar children experience school violence, peer victimization, and bullying within school context (e.g., Agani, 2010; Arënliu, Haskuka, Kelmendi, & Llullaku, 2011; Kelmendi, Arënliu, & Hyseni-Duraku, 2018; UNICEF, 2005).

Given this dearth of research, the main purpose of this study is to examine children's experiences of peer victimization, bullying, perceptions of school safety, and school climate in Kosovar schools. Second, similarities and differences in the prevalence and forms of peer victimization, bullying, perceptions of school safety, and school climate among Albanian and Serbian children will be explored. Third this study explores the relationship between individual variables such as gender, grade, ethnicity, and socio-economic status and children's peer victimization, perceptions of school safety, school climate, and bullying. As no study to date has examined these issues among these groups of school children in Kosovo, this study will not only contribute significantly to the research base, but it also will help to inform prevention and intervention efforts in schools. Finally, this study will build upon the results of a pilot study conducted by Agani in 2010.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study will explore the following research questions and related hypothesis:

Research Question 1: What is the nature and prevalence of peer victimization among Kosovo school children, and how do their experiences vary as a function of gender, grade, and ethnicity?

H1(a) Boys will be significantly more likely than girls to experience physical victimization, attacks on school property, and overall victimization. Girls will be more likely than boys to experience verbal victimization and social manipulation;

H1(b) Children from lower grades (6th and 7th grade) will be significantly more likely to experience all forms of peer victimization than children from upper grades (8th and 9th);

H1(c) Albanian children will be significantly more likely than Serbian children to experience all forms of peer victimization; and

Research Question 2. What is the nature and prevalence of bullying among Kosovo school children and how do their experiences vary as a function of gender, grade, and ethnicity?

H2(a) Boys will be significantly more likely than girls to experience bullying within the school environment;

H2(b) Boys will be significantly more likely than girls to perpetrate bullying within the school environment;

H2(c) Children from lower grades (6th and 7th) will be significantly more likely than children from higher grades (8th and 9th) to experience bullying at school;

H2(d) Children from upper grades (8th and 9$^{th)}$ will be more likely than those from lower (6th and 7th) grades to perpetrate bullying at school environment;

H2(e) Albanian children will be significantly more likely than Serbian children to experience bullying behaviors at school;

H2(f) Albanian children will be significantly more likely than Serbian children to perpetrate bulling behaviors at school;

Research Question 3. How do Kosovo school children perceive their safety at school, and how do children's perceptions of safety vary as a function of gender, grade, and ethnicity?

H3(a) Girls will report feeling significantly less safe at school, compared with boys;

H3(b) Children from lower grades (6th and 7th) will report feeling significantly less safe at school, compared to children from higher grades (8th and 9th);

H3(c) Albanian children will feel significantly safer at school compared to the Serbian students; and

Research Question 4: How do Kosovo children perceive their school climate (as measured by perceptions of disciplinary structure and perception of support at school), and how do their experiences vary as a function of gender, grade, and ethnicity?

H4(a) There will be no significant differences in boys' and girls' perceptions of disciplinary structure at school;

H4(b) There will be no significant differences in boys' and girls' perceptions of student support at school;

H4(c) Children from lower grades (6th and 7th) are significantly more likely to perceive positive school climate, as measured by students' perceptions of disciplinary structure when compared to children from higher grades (8th and 9th);

H4(d) Children from lower grades (6th and 7th) are significantly more likely to perceive positive school climate, as measured by students' perceptions of support when compared to children from higher grades (8th and 9th);

H4(e) There will be no significant differences in Albanian and Serbian students' perceptions of student support;

Research Question 5: What are the relations among children's experiences of peer victimization, bullying, school safety, and school climate?

H5(a) Children's experiences of peer victimization will be significantly positively related to their experiences of being bullied;

H5(b) Children's experiences of peer victimization will be significantly negatively related to their experiences of bullying others;

H5(c) Children's experiences of peer victimization will be significantly negatively related to their perceptions of school safety;

H5(d) Children's experiences of peer victimization will be significantly negatively related to their perceptions of school climate, as measured by perceptions of disciplinary structure and student support;

H5(e) Children's experience of being bullied will be significantly negatively related to their perceptions of school safety;

H5(f) Children's experiences of being bullied will be significantly negatively related to their experiences of bullying others;

H5(g) Children's experience of being bullied will be significantly negatively related to their perceptions of school climate;

H5(*h*) Children's experiences of bullying others will be negatively related to their perceptions of school safety.

H5(i) Children's experiences of bullying others will be negatively related to their perceptions of school climate; and

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H5(j) Children's perceptions of school safety will be significantly positively related to their perceptions of school climate.

Research Question 6: To what extent do students' perceptions of school climate (disciplinary structure and student support) moderate the association between bullying victimization and perceptions of school safety?

H6(a) Positive perceptions of school climate will significantly moderate the association between bullying victimization and perceptions of school safety, after controlling for demographic variables (gender, grade level, and ethnicity). Specifically, when school climate is more positive, the association between being bullied and perceptions of school safety will be less strong.

Research Question 7: To what extent do students' perceptions of school climate (disciplinary structure and student support) moderate the association between peer victimization and perceptions of school safety?

H7(a) Positive perceptions of school climate will significantly moderate the association between peer victimization and perceptions of school safety, after controlling for demographic variables (gender, grade level, and ethnicity). Specifically, when school climate is more positive, the association between peer victimization and perceptions of school safety will be less strong.

Figure 1 illustrates the associations among variables of this study (depicted by red arrows), groups differences based on demographic variables (depicted by purple arrows), and the predicted moderation effects (depicted by blue arrow) of student's perceptions of school climate.

Figure 1: Overall Model Depicting the Hypothesized Associations Among Variables
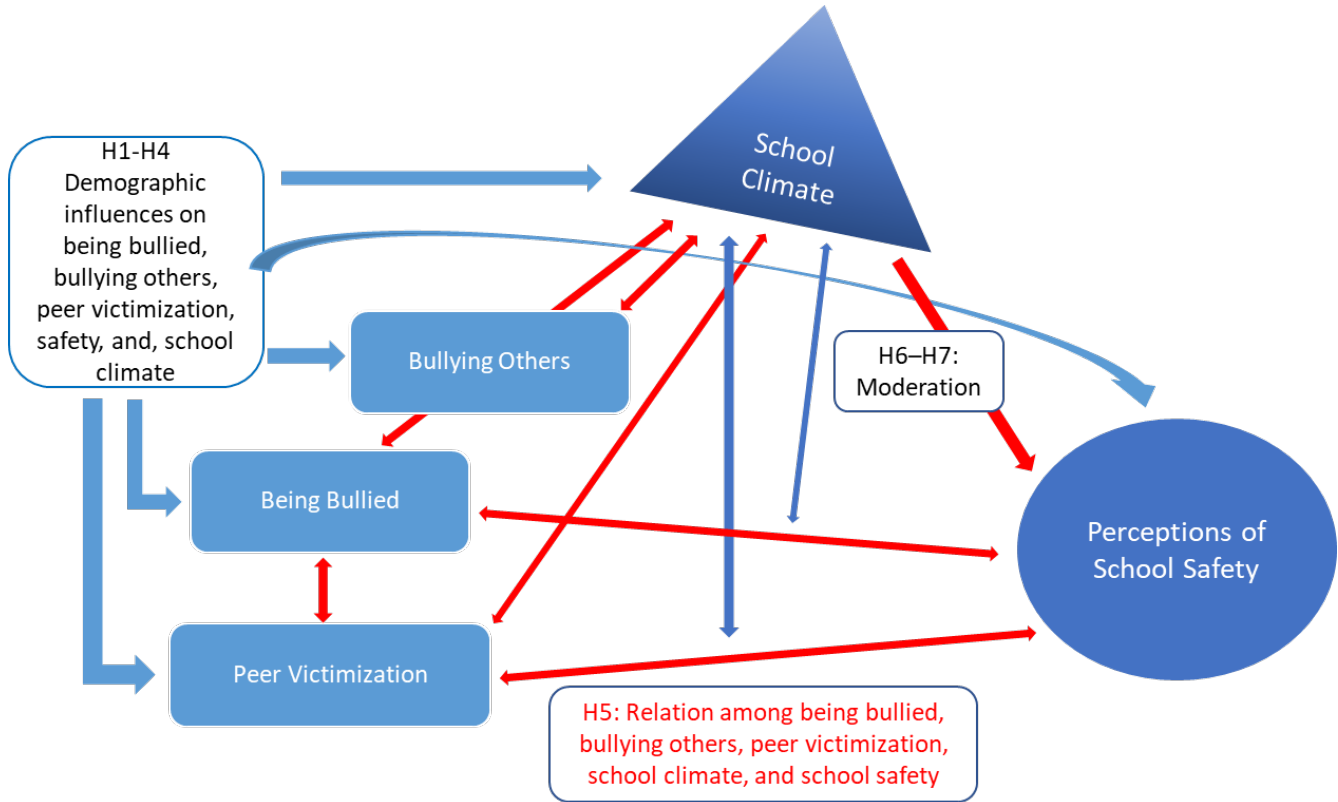
By exploring these research questions and hypotheses this, study aims to fill important gaps in the literature regarding children's exposure to peer victimization, exposure to school violence, bullying, and their perceptions of school safety and school climate, in general and in Kosovo, in particular.

Summary

Chapter I provided an overview of the current situation in this field as well as with a rationale for conducting this study in Kosovo. This chapter ended with presenting the research questions and hypothesis of the study. Chapter II provides a detailed review of literature and highlights key findings. Theoretical frameworks and models are presented to describe the

relationship between children's exposure to peer victimization, bullying, perceptions of school safety, and school climate. In Chapter III, the research methodology is described including participants, procedures, measures, and the approach to analysis. Chapter IV presents findings of the study, and Chapter V addresses limitations of the study, gaps in the literature, future directions for research, and implications for prevention practices.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of sociological studies have found that increases in violence and peer victimization are more likely to occur when rapid demographic changes, internal migration, modernization, and urbanization take place (Black & Krishnakumar, 1998; Ortega, Corzine, Burnett, & Pover, 1999; Sampson & Wooldredge, 1987). Such conclusions appear relevant for Kosovo's post-war period. The fall of the Serbian regime in 1999 left Kosovo with major political, social, educational, and mental-health consequences for Kosovo's citizens. According to studies conducted in the post-war period, the Kosovar population aged 15 or older experienced severe psychological wounds from the war, with 25% showing signs and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), while anxiety and depression also increased and remained high in the post-war period (Cardozo, Kaiser, Gotway, & Agani, 2003). Even six years after the war, these rates remained very high, with 22% of the population aged 15 and older showing signs and symptoms of PTSD, 42% having depression, and 43% experiencing emotional distress (Wenzel, Agani, Maxhuni, & Rushiti, 2006). A recent systematic study of mental health problems in the post-war period in Kosovo (Fanaj & Melonashi, 2017) confirmed the presence of mental health disorders (e.g, depression, somatic symptoms, and chronic pain) among Kosovo citizens, with high prevalence rates of PTSD and trauma-related disorders. Specifically, prevalence rates of PTSD in the general population were found between 17% to 25%.

Other research has documented additional costs of the Kosovo war, including high rates of drug addiction (WHO, 2009), increased suicide rates (Nushi, 2007), poverty and high unemployment, especially among the young population (UNICEF, 2005). Simultaneously, internal migration has negatively affected the Kosovo educational system, causing many city

schools to become overcrowded and many rural schools to close (Forum for Civic Initiatives, 2007). High student-teacher ratios, greater concentrations of students in poverty, and shift to urban school settings has been linked with less favorable perceptions of school environment (Bevans, Bradshaw, Miech, & Leaf, 2007; Birnbaum, et al., 2003; Stewart, 2003) and increased levels of school violence and peer victimization in (Akiba, LeTendre, Baker, & Goesling, 2002).

Further, studies of school violence and peer victimization conducted in the post-war period in Kosovo have found that poverty (e.g., Brajshori, 2011; UNICEF, 2005); poor communication and cooperation among parents, students, and teachers; and overcrowded classes especially in the urban areas (Forum for Civic Initiatives, 2007), combined with challenges of cultural and societal transition after the war, have contributed significantly to increased rates of school violence in the post-war period. Although, there has been a lack of systematic data collection regarding violence and peer victimization in Kosovo schools in the immediate post-war period and the years following, public concern for school violence was high, as a result of reports in the mass media about periodic violent incidents among youth in Kosovo in general and within schools in particular (Gazeta Express, 2010; Zeri, 2013).

Prevalence of Peer Victimization: An International Perspective

In the past two decades, international research has shown that many children in elementary and high schools are victimized by their peers (e.g., Akiba, LeTendre, Baker, & Goesling, 2002; Musu, Zhang, Wang, Zhang, & Oudekerk, 2019; Reijntjes, Kamphuis, Prinzie, & Telch, 2010), making this issue a serious concern for teachers (Astor, Meyer, Benbenishty, Marachi, & Rosemond, 2005; Musu, Zhang, Wang, Zhang, & Oudekerk, 2019; Meyer, Astor, & Behre, 2002) and students (Musu, Zhang, Wang, Zhang, & Oudekerk, 2019; Denmark, Krauss, Wesner, Midlarsky, & Gielen, 2005). For example, in 2017, a national representative survey of

4,942 U.S. student's between ages 12 through 18 years old documented that about 2% of students reported being victimized at school through theft and non-violent victimization during the previous six months (Musu, Zhang, Wang, Zhang, & Oudekerk, 2019). Another nationally representative survey, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS; Kann et al., 2018), found that 6% of U.S. students in grades 9-12 were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property. Moreover, 9% of U.S. high school students had been in a physical fight on school property one or more times during the 12 months before the survey. Further, the National Survey of Children's Exposure Violence II (NatSCEV II; Finkelhor & Heather, 2016) examined incidence and prevalence rates for wider scope of victimization incidents with 4,503 participants from 1 month to age 17. The study found that 18% of children in the last year had experienced an assault by a non-sibling peer while 28% reported to have experiences an assault by a non-sibling peer lifetime.

Similar trends have been also documented from the data gathered from children in 42 European countries and regions. The cross-national study conducted by World Health Organization (WHO, 2016) on Health Behavior in School Aged Children (HBSC) during 2013-2014 with 220,000 young boys and girls of 11, 13, and 15 years old looked at children's involvement in a physical fight in the past 12 months. Although there was variation in victimization rates between countries, findings from Albania (which shares similarities in culture with Kosovo) showed that over 25% of 15 year old boys in Albania reported to have been involved in physical fights at least three times in the past 12 months, while only 3% of girls reported to have been involved in physical fight during the same period. Moreover, data showed that involvement in physical fights decreased with age, thus making younger age groups more vulnerable to experiencing peer victimization in school context.

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Akiba, LeTendre, Baker, and Goesling (2002) conducted a study about school violence among 37 nations and the results showed that large percentage of students worried about being victims of school violence or perceived that their peers were victims of violence within in school environment. Significant differences in rates of school victimization were found among students in the different countries however. For example, although 75% of Hungarian students reported being worried about becoming victims of violence, compared with only 6% of Danish students reported these fears. In more than half of the participating nations, more than one in four students reported being afraid of school violence.

Prevalence of Peer Victimization in Kosovo

In recent years, a common perception has emerged in Kosovo that violence has become part of the society (e.g., Agani, 2010; Agani-Destani, Hoxha, & Kelmendi, 2015; Kelmendi, Arënliu, & Hyseni-Duraku, 2018). This perception is consistent with the long-held cultural belief that "whoever spanks you, loves you," which is quite widespread among parents, teachers, and children throughout the Balkan region.

The first study to systematically examine the nature and extent of violence against children within the Kosovar school environment was conducted by UNICEF (2005). The data were drawn from a wide cross-section of schools, and the study assessed the direct involvement of children and young people, as well as perceptions of teachers and parents. The sample included 680 children (ages 6-18) and 120 teachers. Student participants were from different ethnic groups including Albanians, Serbs, Roma, Ashkali, Turks, Bosnians, and Egyptians, and the teacher sample was also diverse, including, Albanians, Serbs, Turks, and Bosniaks. Qualitative data were gathered from parents from six focus groups (two with ethnic Serbs; two

with ethnic Albanians; and one from each in an urban and rural area) with approximately 10 participants.

Findings from the study showed that for many children people close to them were perpetrators of the violence against them. In fact, the most common perpetrators of violence were teachers or peers. At the same time, there was a widespread perception that boys were at higher risk of physical violence than were girls, while girls were thought to be more often subject to verbal or emotional abuse. When asked if they had personal experiences of violence at school, 29% of the younger children responded in the affirmative. There were no differences in the extent of violence experienced by boys versus girls at school, but respondents from urban areas were more likely to indicate they had experienced school violence (36%), compared with those from rural areas (21%).

A subsequent study conducted by Arënliu, Haskuka, Kelmendi, and Llullaku (2011) aimed to understand victimization among 4,709 high school students between ages 15 and 16 in Kosovo. The results showed that peer victimization was common within school context, with more than half of sample (53%) engaging in some forms of proactive (e.g., fighting, teasing) and reactive violent behaviors (e.g., affective reactions), and 32% of the sample engaging in reactive forms of violence, but not proactive forms of violence. This study further found that male participants reported higher levels of victimization when compared to female participants.

High rates of peer victimization were also found in a pilot study conducted by Agani (2010), which surveyed 247 Albanian and Serbian participants in Kosovo. Participants were students between 11 and 15 years old from 6th-9th grades. The results showed that 90% of participants experienced one or more forms of physical or verbal harassment (e.g., someone made fun of you, or stole your personal property), 25% experienced one or more forms of

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physical attack (e.g., went to a doctor or nurse because you were hurt in an attack or fight, were threatened by a student with a knife), and 1% experienced sexual harassment in schools (e. g., someone sexually harassed you). Also, a recent nationally representative study conducted by Kelmendi, Arënliu, and Hyseni-Duraku (2018) with 9,043 children grades 6 through 9 documented that all forms of victimization were present within the school context. The most common forms of physical victimization included pushing (46%) and fighting (24%).

Bullying

As noted previously, bullying is a specific form of peer victimization, which is common in the school context. The most widely used definition of bullying is provided by Olweus (1978), which states that a person is being bullied when he or she is exposed repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons. Negative actions may be verbal (e.g. threatening, degrading, and/or teasing) or non-verbal (e. g. hitting, kicking, slapping, pushing, vandalizing property, rude gestures, and/or making faces) (Olweus, 1993). As the definition highlights, bullying acts are aggressive, include a power imbalance, and are likely to be repeated over time. Recently, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014,) provided with a uniform definition on bullying that is very close to Olweus definition. According to the CDC, bullying is defined as any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youth that *"involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated"* (p.7). This behavior may inflict harm or distress on the person being bullied including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm. Olweus (1993) noted that bullying behaviors might be direct or indirect in nature. Direct bullying is defined as open physical or verbal attacks on the victim, such as face-to-face taunting, pushing and/or hitting, while indirect bullying includes

social isolation, exclusion from the group, or rumor spreading. Others have noted that bullying may be categorized into three forms: (a) physical (e.g., shoving, hitting, spitting, pushing, tripping), (b) verbal (e.g., name-calling, verbal threats), and (c) relational (e.g., social isolation, rumor spreading) (Gladden et al., 2014). Researchers typically make distinctions between three groups of children who are actively involved in bullying: (a) those who are bullied but do not bully others (commonly referred to as "victims" or "targets" of bullying), (b) those who bully others but who are not bullied (commonly referred to as "bullies" or "perpetrators" of bullying), and (c) those who are bullied and who also bully others (commonly referred to as "bully-victims"). Cook and his colleagues (2010) found that the majority of students who were directly involved in bullying were bullied, followed by those who bully others, and finally by those who were bullying and bully others.

Consequences of Experiencing Bullying and Bullying Others

Findings from the literature have confirmed a relation between children's experiences of bullying and negative mental health, physical, and academic outcomes (Gladden et al., 2014; National Academies, 2016). Researchers have documented both internalizing (e.g., depression, anxiety, fear, and/or withdraw from social contacts) and externalizing problems (anger, aggression, conduct problems, abuse of alcohol and drugs) associated with being bullied (National Academies, 2016). With regard to internalizing problems, Juvonen and Graham (2014) have found that children who experience bullying are more likely to have low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and loneliness. Ttofi, Farrington, Loesel, and Loeber (2011) conducted a meta-analysis with 29 longitudinal studies to examine the extent to which children's experiences of bullying victimization in school predicts depression later in life. Results indicated that children who experience bullying during school years were more likely to develop depression,

thus emphasizing that school-bullying victimization represents a unique childhood risk factor for later depression. Further, Bowes and colleagues (2015) have documented that children who were the target of bullying at age of 13 reported higher rates of depression by the age of 18. Similar findings were observed by Stapinski and his colleagues (2014), who documented that children who experienced peer victimization were three times more likely to develop an anxiety disorder at the age of 18, when compared to their non-victimized peers.

Research has also documented a relation between experiencing bullying and exhibiting externalizing problems. For example a longitudinal study conducted by Tharp-Taylor and his colleagues (2009) found that children who reported being bullied were more likely to report use of alcohol and cigarettes 12 months after the experience occurred, when compared to children who did not report experiences of bullying in schools. Children who bully and are also bullied by others have also been found to have higher rates of aggression than children who did not report bullying experiences (National Academies, 2016).

A number of research studies and meta-analyses have linked experiences of being bullied with poor academic performance and achievement as well (Nakamoto & Shwarz, 2010). For example, Nansel and colleagues (2003) found that being bullied in a given year predicted poor academic outcomes the following year. Further, Bally and colleagues (2014) have documented that being bullied had a negative impact on GPA and standardized test for children who reported bullying.

Research that has focused on physical health consequences of youth has found that students between ages 6 to 9 who bullied others and were also bullied reported more physical health symptoms than children who were only perpetrators or were not involved in bullying. A meta-analysis conducted by Gini and Pozzoli (2009) examined the relation between involvement

in bullying and internalizing problems in the school age population and concluded that children who are both perpetrators and victims of bullying had significant higher risk for psychosomatic problems when compared with children who were only perpetrators of bullying. Further, the longitudinal study conducted by Bogart and his colleagues (2014) among 4,297 children and their parents documented that children who experienced bullying reported higher rates of negative physical health when compared to their peers who did not experience bullying. Fekkes (2005) examined the association between bullying behaviors and psychosomatic health complaints with 2776 elementary school children between 9 and 12 years old in Netherlands. The sample was divided into three groups, which included victims of bullying; perpetrators of bullying; and bully victims. Results showed that victims of bullying were significantly more likely to develop depression and reporting psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches, sleep problems, abdominal pain, bedwetting, and feeling tired when compared to children from the other two groups.

Prevalence of Bullying: International Perspectives

The National Academies (2016) recognizes bullying as an international public health problem, considering the large numbers young people and adolescents involved in bullying behaviors. Within the U.S., prevalence rates of bullying are found in several nationally-representative surveys: (a) the National Crime Victimization Survey, (b) the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, (c) the Health Behavior of School-Aged Children survey, and (d) the National Survey of Children's Exposure Violence II. The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), a national survey for 2017 showed that among students 12 to 18, 20% indicated that they have been bullied in the previous year (a decline from 29% in 2005; Musu et al., 2019). The Youth

Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS; Kann et al., 2018) similarly found that 19% of youth between ages 14-18 had been bullied on school property in 2017.

The Health Behavior in School-Aged Children (HBSC; Currie, Griebler, Inchley, Theunissen, Molcho, Samdal, Dür, 2010) study collected data from 33 European countries and regions over an eight-year period aiming to investigate prevalence of bullying victimization and comparison of trends between participating countries. Results showed that Baltic countries like Lithuania reported a prevalence of 35% of bullying victimization (in the previous year) while Scandinavian countries like Sweden reported fewer than 5% of bullying victimization.

Prevalence of Bullying in Kosovo

There has been limited research on bullying in the post-war period in Kosovo, in part because of challenges in defining the construct and the methodological approach used for conducting studies (Agani, 2010; Kelmendi, Arënliu, & Hyseni-Duraku, 2018). The Balkan culture in general and Kosovar society in particular was unfamiliar with the term bullying. Initially there was no word for bullying in the Albanian or Serbian languages (UNICEF, 2005), so the term was translated into *"ngacmim"* in Albanian, which was found to be the closest word to the original definition provided by Olweus. Therefore, since the publishing report of UNICEF in 2005 the term*"ngacmim"* was used among the researchers in Kosovo.

The first study to examine bullying in Kosovo was conducted by UNICEF (2005) and found that children between 11 and 18 years were affected by injustice in school and expressed difficulties in coping with bullying. A subsequent study conducted by the Kosovo Education Center and UNICEF (2009), found that in a sample of 204 participants ages of 13-15 years, 16% reported being a victim of bullying over their lifetime. A pilot study conducted by Agani (2010) found that out of 247 Albanian and Serbian participants between 6th and 9th grades, 12%

experienced bullying "once or twice" in the past couple of months and 6% experienced bullying "2 or 3 times a month or more" during this timeframe. Most recently, Agani-Destani, Hoxha, and Kelmendi (2015) conducted a study among 1,039 6th and 9th graders in ten primary schools located in five municipalities in Kosovo using the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire. Results showed that 17% of students reported they experienced bullying "once or twice"; 4% had been bullied "two or three times during the last month," 3% had been bullied "once a week," and 4% had been bullied "two or more times a week in the last month" in the past 2-3 months prior to completing the survey. Results from this handful of studies indicate that bullying is present within the Kosovo school context, although it is difficult to identify specific prevalence rates and trends over time, due to significant cultural differences in the conceptualization and definitions of bullying, differences in methodology and measures among studies, and a lack of systematic data collection.

Prevalence of Bullying by Age

Findings from the literature suggest that the prevalence of bullying among children in school contexts varies according to children's ages, gender, and race/ethnicity (National Academies, 2016). With regard to age trends, research by Luxenberg, Limber, and Olweus (2014) examined the prevalence of bullying among 20,000 children from grade 3 to 12 from 629 schools in U.S. They found that children in the lower grades experienced the highest rates of bullying. Specifically, 22% of third graders reported experiencing bullying "two to three times a month" or more often, while 7% of 12th graders had been bullied with that frequency. However, the percentages of students who report bullying others has been documented to be more stable over grade levels remaining between 4% and 6% between third and twelfth grade.

Similarly, the National Crime Victimization Survey (Musu et al., 2019) looked at middle school and found that 28% of U.S. 6th graders reported being bullied, when compared to 14% of 12th graders. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS; Kann et al., 2018) also looked at middle school and reported that the prevalence of being bullied in school was higher among 9th grade (23%) compared to 11th grader (18%). These age trends have been documented and supported by other researchers as well, emphasizing that the likelihood of being bullied is more common in middle school grades compared with high school grades (Brown, Birch, & Kancherla, 2005; McConville & Cornell, 2003; Pellegrini, 2002; Smith, Madsen, & Moody, 1999).

Studies outside of the U.S. have also found similar age trends. A study conducted by Chaux, Molana, and Podlesky (2009) with 53,316 participants from 5th to 9th grade in Colombia showed that 29% of 5th graders reported having been bullied by peers, while 15% of 9th graders had been bullied. The pilot study conducted by Agani (2010) of students in Kosovo also found that students in 7th grade were significantly more likely to experience bullying when compared to children in 8th and 9th graders. However, in terms of bullying others and age, a non-significant statistical relationship was found.

Prevalence of Bullying by Gender

Findings have confirmed a relationship between gender and involvement in bullying (National Academies, 2016). The estimates provided by national surveys conducted by SCS, YRBS, and NatSCEV in U.S have found that girls were more likely to report being bullied when compared to boys. For example, The National Crime Victimization Survey (Musu et al., 2019) conducted among 12-18 years old in U.S., found that female participants (24%) were significantly more likely to experience bullying in the previous year when compared to male participants (17%). In another nationally representative study of U.S. students aged 14-18 years

old, 22% of female participants indicated that they had bullied in school in the previous year, compared to 16% of males (YRBS; Kann et al., 2018). In contrast, the Health Behaviors School-Aged Children (HBSC; Currie et al., 2010) study, which collected data from 33 European countries and regions over an eight-year period, found that that generally across countries boys were more likely to report bullying victimization when compared to female students.

However, a consistent finding is observed when examining gender involvement in bullying others. Most studies have found that boys are more likely than girls to bully others (Brown et al., 2005; Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon 1999; Craig & Pepler, 2003; Cook, Williams, Guerra, & Kim, 2010; Chaux, Molana, & Podlesky, 2009; Ma, 2002; Nansel et al., 2001). In line with these findings, the pilot study conducted by Agani (2010) in Kosovo, found that male students were involved in bullying others more often than female students within school environment.

Research also confirms that boys and girls are differentially involved in four different types of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, and damage to property). The data presented by Musu and colleagues (2019) documented that in 2017 in U.S., schools female students were more likely than males to be the subject of rumors (18% vs. 9%); be made fun of, called names, or insulted (10% vs. 7%); and be excluded from activities (7% vs. 3%). On the other hand, boys were more likely than girls to be physically bullied (6% vs. 4%)

Prevalence of Bullying by Race and/or Ethnicity

Research on racial and ethnic differences in bullying is more limited and less consistent in the literature (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2009; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; National Academies, 2016; Nansel et al., 2001; Wang, 2014). Musu and colleagues (2019) documented that in 2017 in U.S. schools, the percentage of students who reported being bullied

was higher among White (23%) and Black (23%) students compared to Hispanic (16%) and Asian students (7%). Further, data provided by the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (Kann et al., 2018) in the U.S found that the highest rates of experiencing bullying were reported for White high school students (22%) and Hispanic students (16%), while the lowest rates were reported for Black students (13%).

A study conducted by Wang (2014) examined the influence of race/ethnicities on experiencing bullying among 473,198 students in grades 3-12 in the U.S. Results showed that students' race/ethnicity was significantly related to their experiences of being bullied and bullying others. The highest rates of experiencing bullying were found among students who identified as multiracial (31%), followed by students who did not know or did not wish to share their race/ethnicity (27%), followed by African-Americans (23%), Whites (21%), Asian-Americans (19%), and Hispanic students (19%). Wang (2014) also noted differences in rates of bullying among racial and ethnic groups depending on the racial density and racial diversity of the school building. For example, Wang (2014) found that students were less likely to be bullied with a moderately high rate of school ethnic diversity, but they were more likely to be bullied if ethnic diversity was very high.

The study conducted by Agani (2010) with Albanian and Serbian participants in Kosovo found a significant relationship between being bullied and ethnicity with Albanian students reporting being bullied more often than Serbian students. Similar significant relationship was reported for bullying others and ethnicity, with Albanian students bulling others more often than Serbian students. Because of the limited number of studies to examine racial/ethnic differences, additional research is needed to better understand this relationship (National Academies, 2016).

Children's Perceptions of School Safety

Although, there is an extensive research on peer victimization and bullying, much less research has examined the possible impact of peer victimization and bullying on student's perceptions of school safety (Ma, 2002; Swearer & Espelage, 2004; Swearer, Song, Cary, Eagle, & Mickelson, 2001). Data provided by the Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (Kann et al., 2018) in 2017, reported that 7% of high school students in U.S did not go to school at least once during the past month because they felt unsafe either at school property or on their way to and from school. Further, the National Crime Victimization Survey (Musu et al., 2019) reported that in 2017, about 4% of students between 12-18 years old were afraid of attack or harm at school during the school year, while 3% of students reported being afraid of attack or harm away from school during the school year. Findings from the literature have also indicated that students are more likely to feel unsafe in places where bullying is more likely to occur (Hazler, Hoover, & Oliver, 1992; Musu, Zhang, Wang, Zhang, & Oudekerk, 2019; Safer, 1986). The report published by Luxenberg, Limber, and Olweus (2014) among 20,000 children from grade 3 to 12 from 629 schools in the U.S., indicated that bullying occurs in very public places in school such as playground, lunchrooms, hallways/stairways, in class when teacher is in room, in class when teacher is not in room, bathroom, and other visible locations in school. Other studies have also documented those students who report high levels of victimization also report lower perceptions of safety in schools (Musu et al., 2019; Nansel et al., 2001).

Children's Perceptions of School Safety in Kosovo

Research on perceptions of school safety has been very limited in Kosovo. There are only a handful studies that have examined children's perceptions of school safety in relation to peer victimization and bullying. For example, a study conducted by the Kosovo Education Center and

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UNICEF (2009) with 204 participants between the ages of 13 and 15 found that 9% of students reported they were afraid to go to school due to violent acts occurring within the school environment. The authors argued that if this rate were applied to all elementary students in Kosovo, it would translate to approximately 20,000 children who were afraid to go to school. When participants were asked which people in schools that they feared most, 35% reported peers, 24% reported teachers and peers, and 6% reported the principal of school.

Another survey of school violence in public elementary and high schools was conducted by the Municipal Directorate of Education of the Municipality of Prishtina (UNDP, 2015). The study, which included 353 students between the ages of 11 and 19 years old, 82 parents, and 84 teachers, revealed that 21% of student participants did not feel very safe in schools, and even more parents (47%) believed that their children felt unsafe in school. Results from teacher's perspective indicated that 12% felt unsafe at school. Children from cities (e.g., downtown or suburbs) were more likely than those from villages to feel unsafe in school. The pilot study conducted by Agani (2010) among students in grades 6th to 9th found that 77% of participants felt that their school was safe ("often or always"), 80% felt "safe before and after school in the school building" 73% felt "safe before and after school on school grounds," and 79% felt "safe on the way to and from school."

Gender Differences in Children's Perceptions of School Safety

Gender has been found to predict perceptions of school safety and experiences linked with such perceptions. For example, the data provided by Kann and her colleagues (2018) of high school students in the U.S. showed that 6% of white females but 4% of white males did not go to school because of safety concerns. Further, it was found that a higher percentage of female students than male students reported being afraid of attack or harm at school (4 vs. 3%) and away

from school (3 vs. 1%). Similarly, data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (Musu et al., 2019) revealed that in 2017 the prevalence of students not going to school due to being afraid of attack or harm at school was reported to be higher among female students (3%) than male students (2%). The study conducted by Agani (2010) in Kosovo with 247 Albanian and Serbian children between grades 6 and 9 found no significant fender differences in students' perceptions of school safety.

Grade or Age Differences in Children's Perceptions of School Safety

Children's age or grade level in school has also been found to predict how safe a child feels in a school environment. Quite a few studies have found that older children are more likely than younger children to perceive greater safety in schools (e.g., Gumpel & Meadan, 2000; Varjas, Christopher, Henrich, & Meyers, 2007). Similarly, the nationally representative study of 12-18 year-olds in the U.S. (Musu et al., 2019) documented that the percentages of students who reported being afraid of attack or harm at school was higher for students in lower grades when compared to students from upper grades. Specifically, data showed that 5% of students enrolled in the 6th grade reported that they were afraid of attack or harm at school, compared with only 2% of students enrolled in 10th and 12th grade.

Differences in Students' Perceptions of School Safety According to their Race and Ethnicity

Race/ethnicity has also been recognized in the literature as a factor that predicts children's perceptions of safety within the school environment. In their nationally representative study of 12-17-year-olds in the U.S., Musu and colleagues (2019) found that in 2017, a higher percentage of Hispanic students (3%) than White students (2%) reported being afraid of attack or harm at school. The data provided by Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBSS; Kann et al., 2018) in the

U.S. found that among student 14-18, Black (9%) and Hispanic (9%) students were more likely than white students (5%) to stay home from school because of safety concerns. In line with these U.S. findings the study conducted by Agani (2010) with 247 Albanian and Serbian students found that ethnicity played a significant role in children's perceptions of school safety, with Serbian students feeling less safe in the school environment when compared to Albanians students. However, it is important to emphasize lack of data in countries other than the U.S. on the relationship between students' perceptions of school safety by their race and ethnicity.

School Climate as a Moderator of Peer Victimization, Bullying, and Perceptions of School Safety

A positive school climate has been viewed as crucial factor for effective and successful schools (Koth, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2008) and researcher have recognized that peer victimization, bullying, and perceptions of school safety are associated with school climate (e.g., Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Way, Reedy, & Rhodes, 2007; Wang, Selman, Dishion, & Stormshak, 2010). Different terms have been used to describe school climate, but the definition provided by Cohen and his colleagues (2009) on school climate has been frequently cited by researchers. According to Cohen and colleagues (2009) school climate is defined as the "quality and character of school life, that involves the social, emotional, and academic experiences of students, their family members, and school personnel" (p.180). According to this definition, the concept of school climate expands beyond individual variables, by including interpersonal, organizational, and instructional elements. Cohen and his colleagues (2009) highlighted four essential dimensions of school climate that include:

a) Safety (clear and consistent rules; feelings of physical safety; attitudes about violence and bullying)

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b) Teaching and learning (quality of instructions; extent to which social-emotional and academic learning are valued, and systematic and ongoing professional development)

c) Relationships (respect of diversity, connectedness of among members of school community, positive relationships between students, educators, and families)

d) Environmental (cleanness, order, and appeal of facilities, adequate resources)

Individual Characteristics Related to Perceptions of School Climate

Findings from research have consistently documented a relationship between school climate and individual variables such as gender, grade, age, race/ethnicity, and socio-economic status. In terms of relationship between gender and perceptions of school climate a study conducted by Way, Reedy, and Rhodes (2007) among 1,451 adolescents in grades 6 through 8 grade showed that students age was negatively associate with students positive perceptions of school climate. Further, it was found that students' ratings of four dimensions of school climate decreased significantly through middle school. Wang, Selman, Dishion, and Stormshak (2010) surveyed adolescents from grades 6 through 9 and found similar results. Students' positive school climate perceptions decreased over the middle school years for both female and male students.

The relationship between gender and students' perceptions of school climate was examined by Koth, Bradshaw, and Leaf (2008) with 2468 children in 5th grade. Results indicated that female participants were more likely to report positive perceptions of school climate when compared to male participants. Also, findings from a national survey with 16,168 10th graders confirmed that student's gender is associated with perceptions of school climate, documenting that male students perceived school rules to be less fair and clear and teacher-student relationship to be less supportive and warm than female students (Fan, Williams, & Marie-Corckin, 2011).

Researchers have also been interested in examining the relationship between student's perceptions of school climate and socioeconomic status. Way, Reedy, and Rhodes (2007) surveyed 1,451 adolescents in grades 6 through 8 and documented that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds reported less positive peer support at the start of middle school than the students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Further, students from lower socioeconomic status reported that school rules were less clear and consistent than students from higher socioeconomic status.

Finally, there is evidence from literature that documents the relationship between students' perceptions of school climate and their ethnicity/race. For example in a study conducted by Fan, Williams, and Marie-Corckin (2011) with 16,168 10th grade students, Hispanic and Asian students reported less favorable perceptions of school order, safety, and discipline, compared to White students while students who were native American, Hawaiian, and multiracial reported less favorable perceptions of students-teacher relationship compared to other ethnicity/race groups. Other studies (e.g., Koth, Bradshaw, & Leaf 2008) have also confirmed previous findings that students' race is associated with students perceptions of school climate. Specifically, their findings documented that minority students perceived their environment as less safe and reported lower levels of achievement motivation when compared to Caucasian participants.

Associations Between School Climate and Students' Behaviors and Perceptions of School

Findings from the literature have documented that greater disciplinary structure and student support at school were associated with less peer victimization and bullying behaviors Astor, Guerra, & Van Acker, 2010; Goldweber, et al., 2013; Lleras, 2008). Several studies have found that authoritative teaching is positively correlated with student's engagement, academic

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achievement, and lower rates of misbehavior (e.g., Baker, Clark, Crowl, & Carlson, 2009; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Walker, 2008), reduced level of violence (e. g., Brookmeyer, Fanti, & Henrich, 2006; Goldstain, Young, & Boyd, 2008; Karcher, 2002), bullying behaviors (e.g., Birkett et al., 2009; Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2008), and peer victimization (Cornell, Shukla, & Konold, 2015). On the contrary negative school climate (e.g., lack of supportive norms, structure, and relationships) has been found to be positively associated with experiences of peer victimization, bullying, and feeling less safe within school environment (Astor, Guerra, & Van Acker, 2010; Goldweber, et al., 2013; Lleras, 2008).

In addition, Gregory and his colleagues (2010) found that consistent enforcement of school discipline and availability of adults was associated with higher perceptions of school safety among ninth graders. Karcher (2002) found that connectedness between adults and children in school environment served as a powerful predictor against violence in school. Finally, Cornell, Sheras, Gregory, and Fan (2009) examined the level of school violence among ninth graders from 280 public schools in Virginia and found that participants from schools that had threat assessment guidelines reported less bullying, felt more comfortable seeking help, and held more positive perceptions of school climate.

Theoretical Framework

Research on peer victimization and bullying has documented that these phenomena occur in social context (Cook et al, 2007; National Academies Press, 2016). In order to understand peer victimization, scholars in recent years have called for shift from an examination of individual characteristics of youth to an understanding of how contexts, both within and outside school, impact school violence and peer victimization (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005; Furlong & Morrison, 2000; National Academies, 2016; Yoneyama & Naito, 2003). In line with Bronfenbrenner's

ecological developmental theory (1979), Benbenishty and Astor (2005) developed a heuristic model that places school violence in general and peer victimization in particular within nested contexts. Figure 2 illustrates visually this heuristic theoretical model proposed by Benbenishty and Astor (2008; p. 65).

Figure 2: A Model of Social-Ecological Influences on Student Victimization
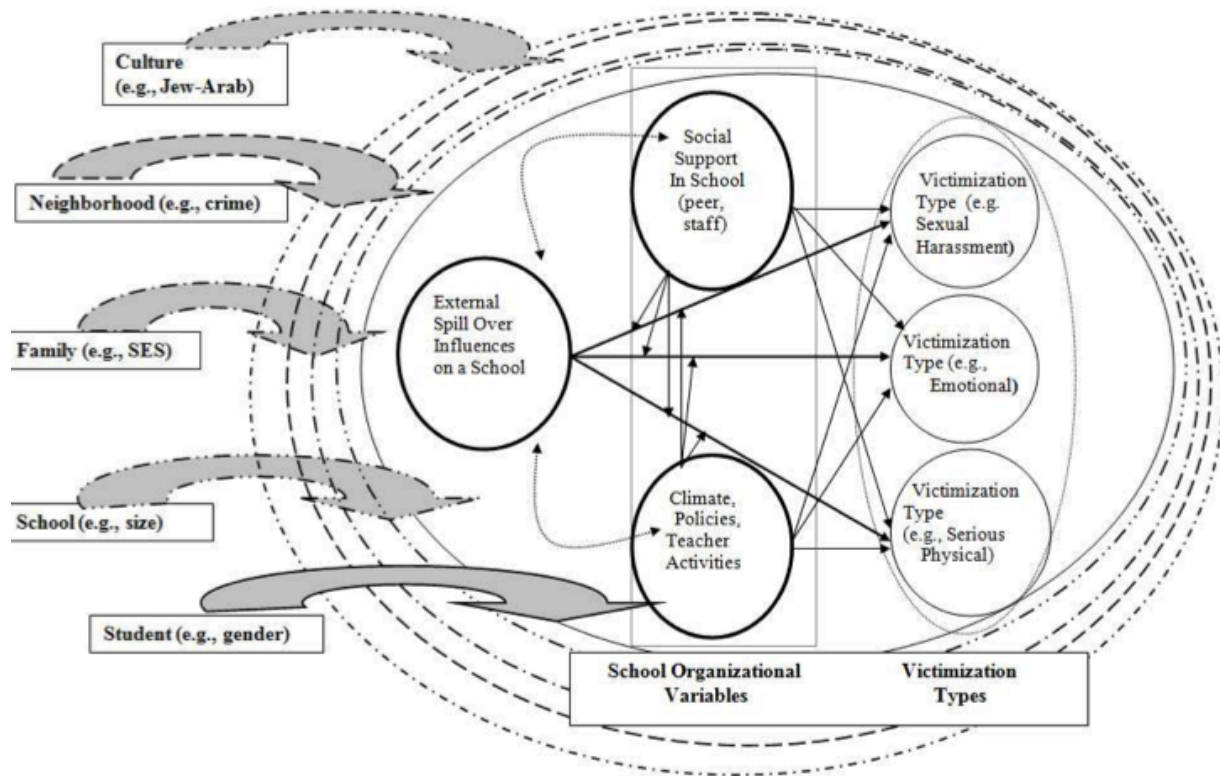
According to this model, human behaviors are considered as a "duet" between the individual's personal traits and contextual and environmental variables (social and physical). In addition, this model takes into consideration other actors that can be involved in the situation in which the behavior occurs (e.g., other students, teachers), and also includes the physical environment (e.g., school and class size, school structure).

This ecological approach examines how external contexts in which a school is embedded interact with internal school and student characteristics. These layered and nested contexts

include the school (e.g., structural characteristics, social climate, and policies against violence), the neighborhood (e.g., poverty, social organization, and crime), the students' families (e.g., education, family structure), cultural aspects of student and teacher population (e.g., religion, ethnic affiliation), and the economic, social, and political makeup of the country (Astor, Benbenishty, Vinokur, & Zeira, 2006; Benbenishty, Astor, Zeira, & Vinokur, 2002; Khoury-Kassabri, Benbenishty, Astor, & Zeira, 2004).

Similarly, Swearer and Espelage (2004) proposed a social-ecological framework of bullying based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model. The authors argued that bullying must be understood across individual, family, peer, school, and community contexts. Moreover, this framework suggests that a variety of variables can influence the interactions between the individual and environmental and personal factors. Figure 3 illustrates visually the social-ecological framework.

Figure 3: A Social-Ecological Framework of Bullying among Youth
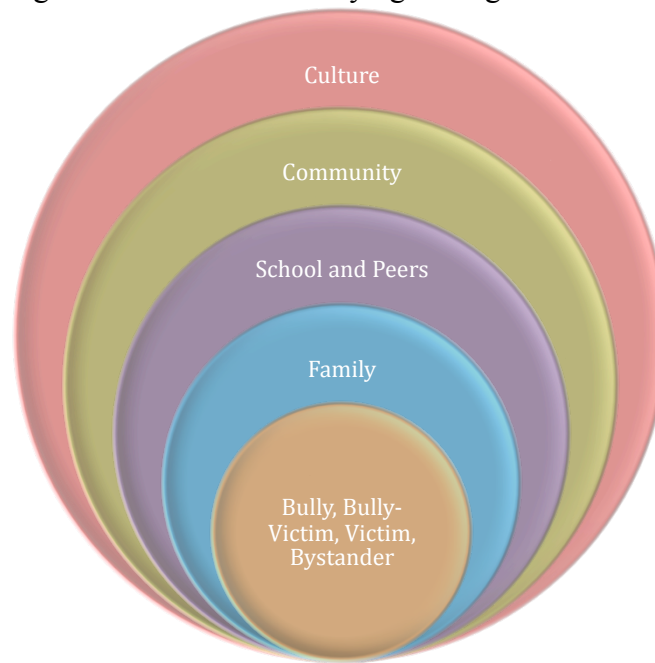
According to this framework, the individual is at the center of his or her social ecology. The individual involved in bullying may be involved as a child who bullies (bully), one who is bullied (victim), one who is bullied and bully others (bully-victim), or bystander. Individual factors (e.g., gender, age) are considered to influence participation in bullying behavior. This framework also includes the peer group and the school (e.g., school climate). For instance, if the individual attends a school where a pro-bullying climate exists, chances are higher that students will be involved in bullying behaviors (National Academies, 2016). Similarly, if the individual's peer group supports bullying, then it is more likely for the child will engage in these behaviors. In addition, this framework indicates that the prevalence of bullying may be increased or decreased if the family and community support or inhibit bullying behaviors.

Culture represents the last component of the framework and encompasses the aforementioned contexts in the social ecology. If cultural norms, values, and beliefs offer opportunities for children and adolescents to practice bullying behavior, then children and young adults may be more likely to be involved in bullying behaviors. Swearer and Espelage (2004)

illustrate how contexts, both within and outside school, impact peer victimization and bullying behaviors for children and young adults. In addition, authors offer the possibility to view and examine peer victimization and bullying behaviors as an interaction between contexts of the child and his/her individual characteristics (gender, grade, and ethnicity).

A final theoretical framework that has influenced this study and has been used by researchers (e.g., Gregory, Cornell, Fan, Sheras, Shih, & Huang, 2010) to conceptualize association between school climate and other variables of interest (namely peer victimization, bullying, and perceptions of school safety) is authoritative discipline theory. This theoretical framework was derived by Baumrind (1968), who argued that authoritative parenting is defined by high structure and support. Authoritative discipline theory is composed of two elements, which include (a) disciplinary structure and (b) student support. Disciplinary structure refers to strict but fair enforcement of school rules, while student support refers to students' experiences of teachers and other school staff as supportive, respectful, and willing to help (Konold, Cornell, Huang, Meyer, Lacey, Nekvasil, Heilbrun, & Shukla, 2014). These two dimensions provide a conceptual framework for school climate that helps to measure the positive features of school climate.

Ecological theory, which provides with a framework to understand peer victimization and bullying, and authoritative discipline theory, which provides with a framework to understand school climate, share the underlying assumption that environmental factors serve as a foundation for influencing violent or aggressive behaviors and for understanding the proposed research questions of this study, which examine the nature and prevalence of peer victimization, bullying, and perceptions of school safety among Albanian and Serbian school children.

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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

As was previously highlighted, this study is based upon a pilot study conducted in 2010 (Agani, 2010) and builds upon the findings and recommendations of the pilot study. Although, there are similarities with the pilot study, this study differs in several ways from the pilot. First, research questions and hypothesis of this study are further elaborated, with a particular focus on the relationship among peer victimization, bullying, perceptions of school safety, and school climate. Therefore, this study includes a more in-depth elaboration of how these constructs overlap and differ, with particular attention to the differences between those students who are bullied and those who bully others. The pilot study examined bullying experiences only from the perspective of students' reports of being bullied, not bullying others. Second, measures of this study have also been revised based upon findings from the pilot. In this regard, as noted below, the Multi-Dimensional Peer Victimization Scale (Mynard & Joseph, 2000) was added, since the California School Climate and Safety Survey (CSCSS, Furlong, 1996; Furlong, Morrison, & Boles, 1991) had dichotomous responses (yes and no), which was found to limit children's responses regarding experiences of school victimization. Third, as detailed below, two additional new schools with Albanian and Serbian students were added in order to increase the sample size of the study as well as to gain a better understanding of children's experiences of school violence, their perceptions of school safety, and bullying within Kosovar schools. By having a larger sample, it also will be possible to detect smaller differences regarding school violence, bullying, and perceptions of school safety. Lastly, an additional research question was included to investigate the extent to which school climate moderates the relation between bullying/peer victimization and perceptions of school safety. The approach to analysis in this

study will, therefore, be more complex than the pilot study, as will be elaborated in more in detail in the next chapter.

Sample Size

For each hypothesis of this study, the effect sizes from at least two similar studies with similar constructs as the current study were identified and calculated in order to determine the neccesary power and identfication of participants for testing each hypothesis. The following formula (Kraemer & Thieniann, 1987) was used for determination of power for this study:

$\Delta = (r - r_0)/(1 - r*r_0)$

$n = v + 2$

Based on the average calculations per each hypothesis, the total number of participants for this study was estimated to be 220 children. However, to be conservative and considering the sensitivity of the topic, this study aimed to have at least 150 participants from each municipality, and 38 participants per each class (half male and half female) within a grade, for a total of 300 participants. In total, 385 participants were included in order to detect even smaller differences and effects and to account for missing data.

Participants

The purpose of this study was to measure the extent of students' perceptions of peer victimization and bullying, school safety, and school climate, with a specific focus on differences between individual characteristics of the participants, such as age, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. A convenience sample was used to collect the data for this study. Specifically, this study targeted boys and girls of Albanian and Serbian ethnicity who were 11-15 years old and from grades 6-9 in two elementary schools in the municipality of Prishtina (Albanian participants) and two elementary schools in the municipality of Gracanica (Serbian participants).

The sample of this study is stratified by ethnicity. Albanian children and the religion of Islam constitute majority of this sample and the majority of children in Kosovo, as confirmed by the last registration of the population conducted by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2012).

The total number of participants for this study was 385 from four elementary schools in Kosovo. Of this total sample, 56% were Albanian (n=214) and 44% Serbian (n=171); 48% (n=184) were male and 52% (n=201) were female. Muslim participants dominated the sample with 72% of participants (n=278), while the remaining 28% were Christian-Orthodox (n=107). Twenty-nine percent (n=110) attended to 6th grade, 26% (n=101) attended 7th grade, 31% (n=118) attended 8th grade, and 15% (n=56) attended 9th grade. It is important to note that a parallel educational system functions for Albanian and Serbian schools, but with slightly different grade divisions. For Serbian students, elementary school ends at 8th grade. Therefore, this study included only 9th graders from Albanian participants. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for participants based on demographic variables.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

Demographic Variables (N = 385)	N (%)	M (SD) [min- max]
Male	184 (47.8%)	
Female	201 (52.2%)	
Age		12.93 (1.15) [11-16]
Albanians	214 (55.6%)	
Serbians	171 (44.4%)	
Muslims	278 (72.2%)	
Christian-Orthodox	107 (27.8%)	
6th grade	110 (28.6%)	
7th grade	101 (26.2%)	
8th grade	118 (30.6%)	
9th grade	56 (14.5%)	

Note: M = mean, SD = standard deviation, min-max = minimum and maximum scores

Measures

The student questionnaire was comprised of five sections, with a total of 88 questions (see Appendix A). The first set of questions assessed basic demographic information, the second measured school victimization, the third set measured general impressions of school safety, and the final set of questions assessed the frequency with which students were bullied and bullied others. Three measures for this study were also used in the pilot study (all but the measure of school victimization), and all have been shown to have good reliability, as described below and presented in Table 2.

Demographic Questions

Respondents were asked to report basic demographic information, including age, gender, grade level, ethnicity, and religious affiliation (see Appendix A).

Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale

  The multidimensional peer-victimization scale developed by Mynard and Joseph (2000) was also used (see Appendix A). The items in this scale asked children to rate how often they have experienced a particular situation at school during the school year, with response alternatives of "not at all," "once," and "more than once." The measure is composed of 16 questions, which form four sub-scales, including: (a) physical victimization, (b) verbal victimization, (c) social manipulation, and (d) attack on property.

  The physical victimization sub-scale asks four questions related to children's frequency of physical victimization at school, such as how often has another student "punched," "kicked," "hurt me physically in some way," and "beat me up." The second sub-scale asks four questions related to children's frequency of verbal victimization at school, such as how often another student "called you names," "made fun because of your appearance," "made fun for some reason," and "swore at you." The third sub-scale asks four questions related to children's frequency of attack on property at school. The questions ask about how often another student "took something without permission," "tried to break something of yours," "stole something from you," and "deliberately damaged some property of yours." The last-sub scale includes four questions related to children's frequency of social manipulation from other students. The questions ask about how often another student "tried to get you into trouble with friends," "tried to make your friends turn against you," "refused to talk to you," and "made other people not talk to you." Mynard and Joseph (2000) reported satisfactory internal reliability for each sub-scale (physical victimization: α=.85, verbal victimization: α=.75, attack on property: α=.73, and social manipulation: α=.77. Scale scores were computed by summing item responses, where higher

scores indicate more victimization. In the current study, the overall internal reliability was satisfactory (α=.88).

Perceptions of School Climate

Items that compose this scale are part of the Authoritative School Climate Survey (ASCS; Cornell, 2013), a 15-item scale that aims to assess two factors of school climate: (a) disciplinary structure, and (b) student support. For the purpose of this study, the student version (designed for students in grades 6-12) was used. The disciplinary structure scale is composed of 7 items and includes four response options: "strongly disagree," "disagree," "agree," and "strongly agree." Examples of questions include: "the punishment for breaking school rules is the same for all students" and "the school rules are fair." Findings from the literature show that disciplinary items have good reliability. For example, Konald and his colleagues (2014) assessed 39,364 students in grades 6-8 found a reliability level of α=.77 for this scale.

The student support scale is divided into two subscales. The first subscale includes four items that measure respect of students, teachers, and other adults within school context. Participants were asked to rate the following statements using a 4-point Likert-type scale ("strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"): most teachers and other adults at this school "care about all students," "want all students to do well," "listen to what students have to say," and "treat students with respect." Konold and his colleagues (2014) studied 39,364 students in grades 7 and 8 from 423 schools and found that this sub-scale had good reliability (α=.87).

The second subscale includes four items that measure students' willingness to seek help within the school context and asks participants to rate the following statements on a 4-point Likert-type scale (from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"): "There are adults at this school I could talk with if I had a personal problem;" "If I tell a teacher that someone is bullying me, the

teacher will do something to help;" "I am comfortable asking my teachers for help with my school work;" and "There is at least one teacher or another adult at this school who really want me to do well." In previous research, Konold and colleagues (2014) found that the reliability for this subscale was .69. In the current study, the overall internal reliability for this Perceptions of School Climate measure (which comprised both the disciplinary structure and student support scales) was satisfactory (α=.87).

General Impression of School Safety

Participants were also asked to answer general questions about their impression of school safety using a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 ("always") to 5 ("never"). This measure includes 8 items from a survey developed by Joong and Ridler (2006). The measure also includes two items about feelings of safety in specific locations within school (bathroom and locker room), which was adapted from a scale developed by Goldstein, Young, and Boyd (2008), and one item regarding perceptions of safety on the playground, which was added for the purposes of this study. Thus, the total number of questions for this scale was 11. The psychometric analysis from the pilot study showed that this scale had a good reliability (α=.88). In the current study the overall internal reliability for this scale was satisfactory (α=.84).

The Olweus Bullying Questionnaire

Students' involvement in bullying was assessed with items from the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (OBQ), a detailed measure that assesses students' self-reports of being bullied, bullying others, their own actions and reactions when they witness bullying, their attitudes about bullying, and their perceptions of teachers' efforts to counteract bullying (Olweus, 2007). The OBQ has been used for more than 20 years and has been extensively validated (Breivik & Olweus, 2015; Olweus, 2013; Solberg & Olweus, 2003). Key questions ask about students'

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experiences being bullied and bullying others during the past couple of months. Students were provided with a standard definition of bullying and were asked about the frequency with which they had been bullied. There were five response options ("I have not been bullied at school in the past couple of months," "It has only happened once or twice," "2 or 3 times a month," "about once a week," and "several times a week." Following this global question, students were asked about the frequency with which they had experienced specific forms of bullying, which captured direct verbal bullying, direct physical bullying, and indirect/relational bullying. Students were also asked a global question about the frequency with which they had bullied other students in school in the past couple of months, coupled with questions about nine different forms of bullying others. Response options were consistent with the questions about being bullied. For the purposes of testing the hypotheses of this study, the scaled bullying victimization and bullying perpetration scale scores were used.

The OBQ has been shown to be a useful measure of bullying prevalence (Olweus, 1999) and analyses on the reliability of OBQ has shown evidence of good reliability (Olweus, 2002; Solberg & Olweus, 2003; Olweus & Limber, 2010). The results from the pilot showed good reliability (bullying others scale: $\alpha=.82$; being bullied scale: $\alpha=.92$). In the current study, the internal validity for both scales was good (being bullied scale $\alpha=.83$; bullying other scale $\alpha=.90$). Reliability of scales, including subscales and reported αs are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Reliability of Scales

Measures	Alpha	# Items
Multi-dimensional Peer Victimization Scale	0.88	n=16
Physical Victimization	0.74	n=4
Verbal Victimization	0.78	n=4
Social Manipulation	0.74	n=4
Attack on property	0.76	n=4
Perceptions of School Climate	0.87	n=15
Disciplinary structures	0.70	n=7
Student support	0.85	n=8
General Impression of School Safety	0.84	n=11
Being bullied	0.83	n=9
Bulling others	0.90	n=9

Procedures

All measures were translated from English into Albanian and Serbian languages and back translated into English by a different certified translator in order to ensure translation accuracy. During the translation process, there were no significant obstacles, however there was some difficulty with translating the term "bullying" into Albanian and Serbian, since there is no word in the respective languages that describes this term. In order to translate this term in the into Albanian and Serbian, the author consulted studies and reports in the field of bullying that have been conducted in Kosovo and in Serbo-Croatian speaking countries (e.g., Serbia, Macedonia). The closest meaning of the definition of "bullying" in the respective languages was used to describe "bullying" in the Albanian and Serbian languages (UNICEF, 2005). For Albanian, the term was translated into *"ngacmim"* while for Serbian, the term was translated into *"maltretirani"* which were found to be the closest words to the original definition provided by Olweus in literature review. However, it is important to emphasize that when both terms were back translated into English, the term in Albanian was associated more with "teasing" while the Serbian term was more associated with "physical maltreatment".

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Clemson University approved the study. Since there is no equivalent institution to an IRB in Kosovo, the permission for conducting the study was approved in May 2013, by the permanent secretary within the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology in Kosovo and this approval served as a supportive document when applying to IRB within Clemson University.

Recruitment

Students were recruited from four schools, two of which were included in the pilot study. The reason for including the two schools from the pilot study were that the researcher had established contacts with director and staff at these schools and they had been very cooperative during the pilot study. As it has been more than five years since the pilot was conducted, students who were in 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th grades for the pilot were now in high school and would not be included in this study.

Although schools were selected through a convenience sample, a random selection of classes in each of the four schools was obtained. At each school, and within each grade level, classrooms were randomly assigned a number (e.g., VI-1 to VI-5, depending upon the number of 6th grade classes in the school). The investigator randomly drew a number (1-5) from a hat to determine which classes were selected to participate in this study. Three classes per each grade were selected in order to account for non-participation, missing data, and maintaining sufficient power for the sample.

Consistent with IRB procedures, students in the selected classes were given information letters, parental consent forms, student assent forms, and envelopes in which to return the forms. They were given two weeks to return signed consent and assent forms, which were collected at

the office of school psychologist throughout the week. A reminder notice was sent home with students one week before the deadline for the collection of all forms.

Confidentiality and Consent

Information letters included the purpose of the study, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality issues, the voluntary nature of the study, and contact details of the researcher in case there were questions from children or parents. See Appendix B, C, and D for copies of all consent forms and the informational letter. Only children who returned parental permission forms and child assent forms participated in the study. A reminder notice was sent home with students one week before the deadline for the collection of all forms. Ten percent of participants did not return a parental permission or child assent during the assigned dates, while 3 to 4% were not part of the study due to their absence when the questionnaire was administered. In total this represents an 86% response rate.

Questionnaires were distributed during a single class period to all participants and completion took part in the classroom. Teachers and other school staff were not present during the administration of the questionnaires. The administration of the questionnaires was overseen by the researcher, who provided detailed instructions about the questionnaires and answered any questions the students had. Students were encouraged to give accurate answers and not to tell anybody at school or at home about how they responded. Students who did not participate in this study were instructed by the school psychologist to stay in class and work on their homework individually.

Approach to Analysis

Data Preparation

After data collection, the process of cleaning and organizing the data took place. Data were analyzed using version 22.0 of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). First, descriptive statistics were conducted in order to get a general understanding of the data. Second, value and variable labels were checked and scales were created. This included checking for skewness and kurtosis as well as performing correlations between scales of this study. Third, factorial validity of the scales, construct validity, and concurrent validity for all scales were assessed. Fourth, missing value assessment on the data set occurred. Lastly, measures were tested for reliability and validity.

Analytic Models

After performing descriptive statistics for the data set, bivariate analyses between two variables and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were assessed to test for group differences based on demographic items (e.g., grade, gender, and ethnicity) for all variables of the study. Specifically, ANOVAS were conducted for research questions 1 through 4. For research question 5, correlations between peer victimization, being bullying, school safety, and school climate were conducted to examine the relationships among the variables. For hypothesis 6 and 7, linear multiple regression was performed to examine the moderation in relationship between bullying and perceptions of safety and peer victimization and perceptions of safety. Further, to interpret the nature of significant interaction variables of the study, the post-hoc PROCESS test was used (Hayes, 2013).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize and visualize the data (see Table 3). As noted

previously, the total number of participants for this study was 385.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variables

Demographic variables	N (%)	M (SD) [min- max]	%
Male	184 (47.8%)		
Female	201 (52.2%)		
Age		12.93 (1.15) [11-16]	
Albanians	214 (55.6%)		
Serbians	171 (44.4%)		
Muslims	278 (72.2%)		
Christian- Orthodox	107 (27.8%)		
6th grade	110 (28.6%)		
7th grade	101 (26.2%)		
8th grade	118 (30.6%)		
9th grade	56 (14.5%)		

Note: M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, Min-Max = Minimum and Maximum values

Table 4 presents correlations between measures of the study. As was expected, there were

significant correlations among the major study variables. For example, positive correlations were

found between the Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale and the OBQ scales (being bullied

and bullying others). Positive correlations were also found between the Perceptions of School

Safety and School Climate measures; and between the Being Bullied and Bulling Others scales.

Negative correlations were found between the Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale and

General Perceptions of School Safety and School Climate scales. Negative correlations were

also found between the Being Bullied scale and the Perceptions of School Safety measure and

the School Climate measure.

Table 4

Correlations between Measures

	Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale	General Perception of School Safety	School Climate	Being bullied	Bulling others
1	-	-.331**	-.173**	.366**	.210**
2		-	.352**	-.366**	-.103
3			-	-.236**	-.161**
4				-	.462**
5					-

** p<0.001

Prevalence of Bullying in Kosovo

This study aimed to understand the prevalence of experiencing bullying within school context. Results from the global question about being bullied at school in the past couple of months showed that more than half of the sample (67%) was not bullied at school in the past couple of months. However, 14% reported that it happened "2 or 3 times a month" or more often (7% reported that it happened "2 or 3 times a month"; 2% reported "once a week"; and 5% reported several times a week). Findings from the pilot study conducted by Agani (2010) on the global question about being bullied at school in the past couple of months documented that 6% responded it happened "2 or 3 times a month or more" (an increase of eight percentage points from 2010).

Similarly, this study aimed to understand the prevalence of bullying others at school with results from the global question documenting that 77% of sample has not bullied another student at school in the past couple of months. However, 9% indicated they had bullied another student "2 or 3 times a month" or more often (4% reported "2 or 3 times a month"; 4% "several times a week"; and 1% "about once a week"). Findings from the pilot study conducted by Agani (2010) on the global question about bullying others in the past couple of months documented that 3%

responded it happened "2 or 3 times a month or more" (an increase of six percentage points since 2010).

Hypothesis Testing

This section reports the results of the hypothesis testing for the study. The first research question explored the nature and prevalence of peer victimization among Kosovo school children, and whether their experiences varied as a function of gender, grade, and ethnicity. This question led to three hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested by conducting bivariate analyses in order to explore associations in the sample. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test for group differences based on demographic items (e.g., grade, gender, and ethnicity) for all of the variables of this research question. However, for some variables, non-parametric tests like Kruskall Wallis were used to understand group differences, by interpreting mean ranks.

H1(a) Boys will be significantly more likely than girls to experience physical victimization, attacks on school property, and overall victimization. Girls will be significantly more likely than boys to experience verbal victimization and social manipulation.

Results showed that both boys and girls experience victimization at a similar rate within the school context (see Table 5). Contrary to the hypotheses, when analyzing subscales (physical, verbal, social manipulation, and attack on property), no gender differences were found on mean levels of physical victimization or verbal victimization, but statistically significant differences were found between males and females on the "attack on property subscale," with females having reported higher mean scores when compared to males. Also contrary to hypotheses, there were no significant differences between males and females on the "social manipulation" subscale, despite a slightly higher mean score reported for females. Thus, hypothesis H1(a) was not supported.

Table 5

Gender Differences on the Peer-Victimization Scale and its Subscales

	Multidimens. Peer-Victimization Scale	Physical Victimiz.	Verbal Victimization	Attack on Property	Social Manip.
Male	188.63	195.57	194.02	179.15	186.1
Female	197	190.64	192.07	205.68	199.32
Mann- Whitney U test	17688.5	18018.5	18305	15943	17221.5
Z	-0.745	-0.653	-0.179	-2.546	-1.288
p	0.456	0.513	0.858	0.011	0.198

H1(b) Children from lower grades (6th and 7th grade) will be significantly more likely to experience all forms of peer victimization than children from upper grades (8th and 9th);

No statistically significant differences were found when analyzing peer victimization and grade (see Table 6). This hypothesis was not supported.

Table 6

Grade differences on Peer Victimization

Grade	School Safety Mean Rank	
6	128.56	
7	114.72	
8	135.54	
9	115.95	
Kruskal Wallis Test		3.821
sig.		0.281

H1(c) Albanian children will be significantly more likely than Serbian children to experience all forms of peer victimization.

Significant results were obtained when analyzing ethnicity and levels of peer victimization, confirming the hypothesis of this study. As can be seen in Table 7, Albanian

participants had significantly higher scores than Serbian participants with respect to peer victimization.

Table 7

Ethnicity and Peer Victimization

	Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale Mean Rank Score	
Albanian students	213.12	
Serbian students	167.82	
Mann- Whitney U test		13992
Z		-4.015
sig.		0.001

The second research question explored the nature and prevalence of bullying among Kosovo school children and whether their experiences varied as a function of gender, grade, and ethnicity. This question led to six hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested by using bivariate analyses in order to explore associations in the sample. Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) were used to test for group differences based on demographic items (e.g., grade, gender, and ethnicity) for all of the variables. However, for some variables, non-parametric tests (Kruskall Wallis) were used to understand group differences were used, by interpreting mean ranks.

H2(a) Boys will be significantly more likely than girls to experience bullying within the school environment;

As shown in Table 8, no significant differences were found regarding boys' and girls' experiences of being bullied. This hypothesis was not supported.

Table 8

Boys' and Girls' Self-Reports of Bullying Victimization

Gender	Mean Victimization Rank
Male	194.93
Female	191.23
Mann- Whitney U test	18136.5
Z	-0.329
sig.	0.742

H2(b) Boys will be significantly more likely than girls to perpetrate bullying within the school environment;

Statistically significant differences were found between boys and girls with regard to their perpetration of bullying, confirming the hypothesis that boys perpetrate bullying more than girls (see Table 9).

Table 9

Boys' and Girls' Self-Reports of Bullying Perpetration.

Gender	Mean Perpetration Rank	
Male	206.3	
Female	180.83	
Mann- Whitney U test		16045
Z		-2.374
sig.		0.018

H2(c) Children from lower grades (6th and 7th) will be significantly more likely than children from higher grades (8th and 9th) to experience bullying at school.

Statistically significant differences were found between bullying victimization and grade level. Further testing revealed that children from lower grades (6th and 7th) were more likely to experience bullying at school than children from higher grades (8th and 9th). This hypothesis was supported.

Table 10

Self-Reports of Bullying Victimization by Grade Level

	Experience Bullying	Perpetration Bullying
Grade	Mean Rank	Mean Rank
6	209.26	205.06
7	202.36	192.2
8	177.88	185.79
9	176.04	185.94
Kruskal Wallis Test	6.673	2.260817
sig.	0.08	0.52

H2(d) Children from upper grades (8th and 9th) will be more likely than those from lower grade (6th and 7th) to perpetrate bullying at school environment.

As shown in Table 11, a non-significant relationship was found between perpetration of bullying and grade level. This hypothesis was not supported.

Table 11

Self-reports of Bullying Perpetration by Grade Level

	Experience Bullying	Perpetration Bullying
Grade	Mean Rank	Mean Rank
6	209.26	205.06
7	202.36	192.2
8	177.88	185.79
9	176.04	185.94
Kruskal Wallis Test	6.673	2.260817
sig.	0.08	0.52

H2(e) Albanian children will be significantly more likely than Serbian children to experience bullying behaviors at school.

As shown in Table 12, statistically significant differences were found between Albanian and Serbian children with regard to their rates of bullying victimization. Specifically, Albanian children were more likely to experience bullying than Serbian children. This hypothesis was supported.

Table 12

Self-Reports of Bullying Victimization by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Experience Bullying Mean Rank
Albanian	208.55
Serbian	173.54
Mann- Whitney U test	14970
Z	-3.097
sig.	0.002

H2(f) Albanian children will be significantly more likely than Serbian children to perpetrate bulling behaviors at school;

As noted in Table 13, a non-significant relationship was found between Albanian and Serbian participants in their perpetration of bullying, with both Albanian and Serbian students perpetrating similar levels of bullying. This hypothesis was not supported.

Table 13

Self-Reports of Bullying Perpetration by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Perpetration Bullying Mean Rank
Albanian	202.11
Serbian	181.6
Mann- Whitney U test	16347.5
Z	-1.901
sig.	0.057

The third research question examined how Kosovo school children perceive their safety at school, and how their perceptions of safety varied as a function of gender, grade, and ethnicity.

This question led to three hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested by using bivariate analyses between two variables in order to explore associations in the sample. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to test for group differences based on demographic items (e.g., grade, gender, and ethnicity) for all of the variables of this research question. However, for some variables, non-parametric tests were used, like Kruskall Wallis for understanding group differences, by interpreting mean ranks.

H3(a) Girls will report feeling significantly less safe at school, compared with boys;

No statistically significant difference was found between boys and girls with regard to their feelings of safety at school (see Table 14). Thus, the hypothesis was not supported.

Table 14.

Boys' and Girls' Perception of School Safety

	School safety Mean Rank
Males	131.1
Females	119.9
Mann Whitney U	7113
Z	-1.226
sig.	0.22

H3(b) Children from lower grades (6th and 7th) will report feeling significantly less safe at school, compared to children from higher grades (8th and 9th);

No statistically significant difference was found in students' feelings of safety at different grade levels (see Table 15). This hypothesis was not supported.

Table 15.

Students' Perception of School Safety by Grade

Grade	School Safety Rank Score	
6	128.56	
7	114.72	
8	135.54	
9	115.95	
Kruskal Wallis Test		3.821
sig.		0.281

H3(c) Albanian children will feel significantly safer at school compared to the Serbian students.

No statistically significant difference was found for ethnicity and feelings of safety, as shown in Table 16. This hypothesis was not supported.

Table 16.

Students Perceptions of School Safety by Ethnicity

	School Safety Mean Rank Score	
Albanian	118.62	
Serbian	131.65	
Mann- Whitney U test		6976.5
Z		-1.425
sig.		0.154

The fourth research question examined how Kosovo children perceive their school climate (as measured by perceptions of disciplinary structure and perception of support at school), and how their experiences vary as a function of gender, grade, and ethnicity. This question led to five hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested by using bivariate analyses between two variables in order to explore associations in the sample. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to test for group differences based on demographic items (e.g., grade, gender, and ethnicity) for all of the variables of this research question. However, for some variables, a non-

parametric test (Kruskall Wallis) was used to understand group differences, by interpreting mean ranks.

H4(a) There will be no significant differences in boys' and girls' perceptions of disciplinary structure at school.

As shown in Table 17, non-significant differences were found for perceptions of disciplinary structure at school by gender, supporting the hypothesis.

Table 17

Boys' and Girls' Perception of School Climate (Disciplinary Structure)

	Disciplinary Structure	Rank Score
Male	197.21	
Female	189.15	
Mann- Whitney U test		17717.5
Z		-0.714
sig.		0.475

H4(b) There will be no significant differences in boys' and girls' perceptions of student support at school.

As shown in Table 18, no significant differences were found for perceptions of student support at school by gender, supporting the hypothesis.

Table 18

Boys' and Girls' Perception of School Climate (Student Support)

	Student Support	Mean Score
Male	206.3	
Female	180.83	
Mann- Whitney U test		17974.5
Z		-0.48
sig.		0.631

H4(c) Children from lower grades (6th and 7th) are significantly more likely to perceive positive school climate, as measured by students' perceptions of disciplinary structure when compared to children from higher grades (8th and 9th).

Contrary to the hypothesis, results showed that children from higher grades were significantly more likely to report positive school climate when compared to lower grades (see Table 19). Thus, the hypothesis was not supported.

Table 19

Students' Perceptions of School Climate by Grade

| | Disciplinary Structure | |
Grade	Mean Rank	
6	175.45	
7	181.93	
8	227.22	
9	175.31	
Kruskal Wallis Test		16.49
sig.		0.001

H4(d) Children from lower grades (6th and 7th) are significantly more likely to perceive positive school climate, as measured by students' perceptions of support when compared to children from higher grades (8th and 9th).

Contrary to the hypothesis, results showed that children from higher grades were more likely to report perceptions of support when compared to lower grades (see Table 20). Therefore, the hypothesis was not supported.

Table 20

Students' Perceptions of School Climate by Grade

Grade	Student Support Mean Rank
6	171.92
7	181.46
8	225.32
9	187.12
Kruskal Wallis Test	15.493
sig.	0.001

H4(e) There will be no significant differences in Albanian and Serbian students' perceptions of disciplinary structure and student support.

Contrary to the hypothesis, statistically significant differences were found for Albanian students' perceptions of disciplinary structure and student support in comparison to Serbian students. Specifically, as shown in Table 21, Albanian Students reported more positive school climate (on both scales), compared with Serbian students. This hypothesis was not supported.

Table 21

Albanian and Serbian Students' Perceptions of School Climate

	Disciplinary Structure	Student Support
Albanian	206.61	211.45
Serbian	175.97	169.91
Mann- Whitney U test	15385.5	14349
Z	-2.698	-3.681
sig.	0.007	0.001

The fifth research question examined the relations among children's experiences of peer victimization, bullying, school safety, and school climate. This question led to ten hypotheses. As shown in Table 22, correlations between peer victimization, being bullied, bullying others,

school safety, and school climate were conducted to examine the relationships among the variables.

H5(a) Children's experiences of peer victimization will be significantly positively related to their experiences of being bullied.

Spearman's Rho showed a significant positive association between peer victimization and experiences of being bullied, $r = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$. This hypothesis was supported.

H5(b) Children's experiences of peer victimization will be significantly negatively related to their experiences of bullying others.

Contrary to the hypothesis, Spearman's Rho showed a significant positive association for peer victimization and experiences of bullying others, $r = 0.21$, $p < 0.01$. This hypothesis was not supported.

H5(c) Children's experiences of peer victimization will be significantly negatively related to their perceptions of school safety.

Spearman's Rho showed a significant negative association between peer victimization and perceptions of school safety, $r = -0.33$, $p < 0.01$. This hypothesis was supported.

H5(d) Children's experiences of peer victimization will be significantly negatively related to their perceptions of school climate, as measured by perceptions of disciplinary structure and student support.

Spearman's Rho showed a negative association between peer victimization and perceptions of school climate as measured by disciplinary structure and student support, $r = -0.17$, $p < 0.01$. This hypothesis was supported.

H5(e) Children's experience of being bullied will be significantly negatively related to their perceptions of school safety;

Spearman's Rho showed a negative association between being bullied and perceptions of school safety, r = -0.36, p < 0.01. This hypothesis was supported.

H5(f) Children's experiences of being bullied will be significantly negatively related to their experiences of bullying others;

A significant positive association between experiencing bullying and bullying others was found, r = 0.42, p < 0.01. This hypothesis not supported.

H5(g) Children's experience of being bullied will be significantly negatively related to their perceptions of school climate;

Spearman's Rho showed a significant negative association between being bullied and perceptions of school climate, r = -0.23, p < 0.01. This hypothesis was supported.

H5(*h*) Children's experiences of bullying others will be negatively related to their perceptions of school safety.

Spearman's Rho showed a significant association between bullying others and their perceptions of school safety, r = -0.36, p = 0.05. This hypothesis was supported.

H5(i) Children's experiences of bullying others will be negatively related to their perceptions of school climate;

Spearman's Rho showed a negative association between bullying others and perceptions of school climate, r = -0.16, p < .01. This hypothesis was supported.

H5(j) Children's perceptions of school safety will be significantly positively related to their perceptions of school climate.

Spearman's Rho showed a significantly positive association between perceptions of school safety and perceptions of school climate, r = 0.35, p < 0.01). This hypothesis was supported.

Table 22

Correlations among Peer Victimization, OBQ, School Safety, and School Climate

	Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale	General Perception of School Safety	School Climate	Being bullied	Bulling others
1	-	-.331**	-.173**	.366**	.210**
2		-	.352**	-.366**	-.103
3			-	-.236**	-.161**
4				-	.427**
5					-

*** $p<0.001$*

The sixth research question examined the extent to which students' perceptions of school climate (disciplinary structure and student support) moderated the association between bullying victimization and perceptions of school safety. This led to one hypothesis. Separate linear regression was performed to understand prediction of bullying victimization by school climate and perception of school safety while controlling for demographic variables.

H6(a) Positive perceptions of school climate will significantly moderate the association between bullying victimization and perceptions of school safety, after controlling for demographic variables (gender, grade level, and ethnicity). Specifically, when school climate is more positive, the association between being bullied and perceptions of school safety will be less strong.

First, linear regression analyses were conducted to understand prediction of bullying victimization by school climate and perceptions of school safety, while controlling for demographic variables (gender, grade level, and ethnicity). As shown in Table 23, the overall adjusted R-square was 0.24, indicating that this model explains 24% of variance on experiencing bullying (moderation excluded).

Table 23.

Linear Regression for Experiencing Bullying

Predictors	Beta	S.E.	95% C.I.	
General Impression of School Safety	(-0.267)**	0.038	-0.246	-0.095
Perception of School Climate	(-0.315)**	0.075	-0.519	-0.225
Gender	-0.094	0.694	-2.54	0.196
Ethnicity	-0.039	0.813	-2.091	1.113
Grade	-0.102	0.358	-1.311	0.097
SES	0.048	0.407	-0.477	1.128
Model X^2	14.069**			
Adjusted R Square	0.239			

*p<0.05, ** p<0.001*

Secondly, when analyzing individual predictors, it was noticed that perceptions of school

safety was significantly negatively associated with bullying victimization, B = -0.27, p < 0.01, CI

= -0.246 – (-0.095). School climate was also found to be negatively associated with experiences

of bullying B = -0.215, p < 0.01 (Confidence intervals [CI :-0.519 – (-0.225)]. Demographic

variables were found to be non-significant.

To test the hypothesis that positive perceptions of school climate serves as a moderator

between experiencing bullying and perceptions of school safety while controlling for

demographic variables, the PROCESS model of Hayes (2013) was used. As shown in Table 24,

overall this interaction term accounted for a significant amount of variance in experiencing

bullying, R-square = 0.2, F (7, 377) = 10.6, p < 0.01. Therefore, findings suggest that interaction

term between school climate and perceptions of school safety was significant B = 0.1, p < 0.1,

while controlling for demographic variables. Also, in this model of moderation, only grade level

(see Table 24) was found to be negatively associated with experiencing bullying. Thus, an

assumption for this model might be made that school climate serves as a moderator between

individual variables.

Table 24

Moderation Analysis for Experiencing Bullying

Predictor	β	S.E.
General Impression of School Safety	(-2.8)**	0.7
Perception of School Climate	(-0.2)**	0
General Impression of School Safety * Perception of School Climate	0.1**	0.1
Gender	(-0.6)	0.6
Ethnicity	(-0.7)	0.7
Grade	(-0.8)*	0.3
SES	(-0.2)	0.4

*p<0.05, **p<0.001

As shown in Table 25, negative perceptions of school climate in interaction with perceptions of school safety increased the likelihood of experiencing bullying within the school context. Similarly, average (neutral) perceptions of school climate was significantly associated with experiences of bullying. Finally, positive perceptions of school climate in interaction with perceptions of school safety were significantly not associated with experiencing of bullying.

Table 25

Conditional Effects for Experiencing Bullying

General Impressions of School Safety	β	S.E.
One SD below the mean	(-0.5)**	0.01
At the mean	0.01	0.01
One SD above the mean	0.5	0.1

The last research question examined the extent to which students' perceptions of school climate (disciplinary structure and student support) moderated the association between peer victimization and perceptions of school safety. This led to one hypothesis.

H7(a) Positive perceptions of school climate will significantly moderate the association between peer victimization and perceptions of school safety, after controlling for demographic variables (gender, grade level, SES, and ethnicity). Specifically, when school climate is more

positive, the association between peer victimization and perceptions of school safety will be less strong.

First, linear regression analyses were conducted in order to understand prediction of peer victimization by perceptions of school safety while controlling for demographic variables (gender, grade level, SES, and ethnicity). Overall, adjusted R-square was 0.09 indicating that this model explains 9% of variance in peer victimization (moderation excluded). Secondly, when analyzing individual predictors, it was noticed that only general impression of school safety was significantly negatively associated with peer victimization Beta = - 0.281, $p < 0.01$ (Confidence intervals [CI: -0.243 – (-0.089)]. School climate was found to be not significant, including demographic variables.

To test the hypothesis that when school climate is more positive, the association between peer victimization and perceptions of school safety will be less strong while controlling for demographic variables (gender, grade level, SES, and ethnicity) the PROCESS model of Hayes (2013) was used. As shown in Table 26, overall this interaction term was found to be significant with B = 0.1, $p < 0.1$.

Table 26

Moderation Analysis for Peer Victimization

Predictor	β	S.E.
General Impression of School Safety	(-0.8)**	0.6
Perception of School Climate	(-0.2)	0.2
General Impression of School Safety * Perception of School Climate	0.1**	0.7
Gender	0.6	0.6
Ethnicity	(-1.4)	0.6
Grade	0.3	0.3
SES	0.4	0.4

*p<0.05, **p<0.001

Summary of Results

This study was composed of seven research questions and 28 hypotheses. To test the first research question and three hypotheses, bivariate analyses and ANOVA were used to test for group differences in peer victimization based on demographic items. Two hypotheses were not supported, one was partially supported, and two were rejected. The first hypothesis was not supported, with findings suggesting that both boys and girls experience peer victimization at a similar rate within the school context. For the second hypothesis it can be argued that it was partially supported, with results documenting that 7th graders were more likely to report peer victimization when compared to students from other grades, specifically when compared to upper grades. For the third hypothesis, findings revealed significant differences with regard to Albanian and Serbian students' levels of peer victimization, thus confirming the hypothesis that Albanian children were significantly more likely than Serbian children to experience all forms of peer victimization.

To test the second research question and six hypotheses, bivariate analyses and ANOVA were used to test for group differences in bullying victimization and perpetration based on demographic items. Five hypotheses were rejected and three were confirmed. The first hypothesis was not supported, with findings indicating non-significant differences in boys' and girls' experiences of bulling. However, differences between perpetration of bullying and gender were found, confirming the hypothesis that boys perpetrate bulling more than girls. Consistent with the hypothesis, statistically significant differences were found with regard to students' experiences of bullying based on grade level. Participants from lower grades (6th and 7th) were more likely to experience bullying at school than children from higher grades (8th and 9th). However, contrary to the hypothesis, findings showed a non-significant relationship between

perpetration of bullying and grade level. The fifth hypothesis suggested statistically significant differences in bullying experiences based on ethnicity. Indeed, findings confirmed that Albanian children were more likely to experience bullying than Serbian children. On the contrary, for the sixth hypothesis, no ethnic group differences were found for perpetration of bullying, with both Albanian and Serbian students reporting similar levels of bullying perpetration.

To test the third research question and three hypotheses, bivariate analyses and ANOVA were used to test for group differences in students' perceptions of safety, based on demographic items. Results did not support any of the three hypotheses, with findings suggesting no significant differences among the demographic groups in students' perceptions of safety.

To test the fourth research question and five hypotheses, bivariate analyses and ANOVA were used to test for group differences in school climate (school disciplinary structure and perceptions of student support) based on demographic items. Two hypotheses were confirmed and five were rejected. The first and second hypothesis was supported, with findings suggesting no differences in boys' and girls' perceptions of disciplinary structure or perceptions of student support at school. Results did not support the remaining hypotheses and indicated that: (a) children from higher grades were more likely to report positive disciplinary structure and perception of support, when compared to lower grades; and (b) Albanian children perceived greater disciplinary structure and more student support, compared with Serbian students.

To test the fifth research question and ten hypotheses, correlations were conducted. Eight hypotheses were confirmed and two were rejected. Results showed that significant positive association between peer victimization and experiences of being bullied, thus confirming the first hypothesis. Contrary to the second hypothesis, a significant positive association for peer victimization and experiences of bullying others was found. A significant negative association

between peer victimization and perceptions of school safety was found, thus supporting the third hypothesis. Similarly, a negative association between peer victimization and perceptions of school climate as measured by disciplinary structure and student support was found, thus supporting the fourth hypothesis. A negative association between being bullied and perceptions of school safety was found thus supporting the fifth hypothesis. A moderate positive significant association between experiencing bullying and bullying others was found, thus this hypothesis was not supported. The seventh hypothesis was confirmed by results showing a significant negative association between being bullied and perceptions of school climate. A significant association between bullying others and their perceptions of school safety was found, thus confirming the eighth hypotheses. A negative association between bullying others and perceptions of school climate was found, thus confirming the ninth hypothesis. Similarly, a significantly positive association between perceptions of school safety and perceptions of school climate was found, thus confirming the last hypothesis.

To test the sixth research question and one hypothesis, linear regression was performed to understand prediction of bullying victimization by school climate and perception of school safety, while controlling for demographic variables. Linear regression analyses indicated that this model explains 24% of variance with regard to experiencing bullying, when moderation was excluded. When analyzing individual predictors, it was noticed that perception of school safety was significantly negatively associated with bullying victimization, while school climate was also found to be negatively associated with experiences of bullying. Demographic variables were found to be non-significant.

To test the hypothesis that positive perceptions of school climate serves as a moderator between experiencing bullying and perceptions of school safety while controlling for

demographic variables, the PROCESS model of Hayes (2013) was used. Overall the interaction term accounted for a significant amount of variance in experiencing bullying, while controlling for demographic variables. Also, in this model of moderation only grade level was found to be negatively associated with experiencing bullying. Thus, it can be concluded that school climate serves as a moderator between bullying victimization and perceptions of school safety.

Finally, to test the hypothesis of the last research question, linear regression analyses were conducted in order to understand prediction of peer victimization by perceptions of school safety while controlling for demographic variables (gender, grade level, and ethnicity). Linear regression analyses indicated that this model explains 9% of variance in peer victimization, when moderation was excluded. Secondly, when analyzing individual predictors, it was noticed that only general impression of school safety was significantly negatively associated with peer victimization. School climate was found to be not significant, including demographic variables.

To test the hypothesis that when school climate is more positive, the association between peer victimization and perceptions of school safety will be less strong while controlling for demographic variables (gender, grade level, and ethnicity), the PROCESS model of Hayes (2013) was used. Overall, this interaction term was found to be non-significant.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In post-war Kosovo a common perception has emerged that violence has become part of the society. Thus, this study responded to heightened attention and interest among educators, policymakers, and researchers in the post-war period. Moreover, this study responded to the very limited research base on children's experiences of peer victimization, bullying, perceptions of school safety, and school climate in Kosovar schools. None of the previous research conducted in Kosovo has examined similarities and differences in the prevalence and forms of the above-mentioned variables among Albanian and Serbian children and the relationship between individual variables such as gender, grade, and ethnicity and children's peer victimization, perceptions of school safety, school climate, and bullying.

The findings of this study with 385 Albanian and Serbian children from grades six through nine documented that peer victimization and bullying are present within school context, and these experiences are negatively associated with perceptions of school safety. Furthermore, school climate was documented to significantly affect the relationship between bullying victimization and perceptions of safety. Group differences on individual variables were documented as well.

This chapter presents key findings, discusses implication for practice, recognizes limitations, and suggests recommendations for future research.

Key Findings

Differences in Peer Victimization by Demographic Information

One of the main objectives of this study was to explore the nature and prevalence of peer victimization among Kosovo school children, and whether their experiences varied as a function

of gender, grade, and ethnicity. In line with findings from literature (e.g., Musu et al., 2019; Reijntjes et al., 2010) the current study confirmed that in Kosovar schools, children are victimized by their peers.

Peer victimization and gender. Contrary to findings reported in the U.S., and European literature (e.g, Arënliu et al., 2011), which has found that male participants report higher levels of victimization when compared to female participants, this study found no gender differences in students' reports of peer victimization (physical victimization, verbal victimization, and social manipulation). Rather it was found that both boys and girls experience victimization at similar rates.

Peer victimization and grade level. Findings from studies (e.g., WHO, 2016) conducted in Balkan region (e.g., Albania) have documented that children from lower grades experience more forms of peer victimization when compared to children from upper grades. Contrary to findings from the literature, this study found no statistically significant differences in rates of peer victimization for youth in different grades.

Peer victimization and ethnicity. This study was especially innovative in exploring ethnicity and experiences of peer victimization, since this relationship had not been explored in other studies in the region. Findings revealed that Albanian children are significantly more likely to experience peer victimization than Serbian children.

Differences in Being Bullied and Bullying Others by Demographic Information

Findings from the literature suggest that the prevalence of bullying among children in school contexts varies according to children's ages, gender, and race/ethnicity (National Academies, 2016). Therefore, another objective of this study was to explore nature and

prevalence of bullying among Kosovo school children and whether their experiences varied as a function of gender, and grade, ethnicity.

Results from this study documented that a majority of participants (67%) from the sample had not experienced bullying in the previous 2-3 months, while 14% reported that it happened "2 or 3 times a month" or more often (with 5% of these indicating it happened quite frequently--several times a week). Results showed that 77% of sample had not bullied another students at school in the previous 2-3 months, while 9% had bullied others "2 or 3 times a month" or more often (with 4% noting they had bullied others quite frequently--"several times a week").

In comparison to the current study, findings from the study conducted by Destani-Agani, Kelmendi, and Hoxha (2015), documented similar percentage (69%) of participants that had not experienced bullying in the previous 2-3 months. However, the rates of experiencing bullying "2 or 3 times a month" or more were only 4%. A higher percentage (6%) of experiencing bullying "2 or 3 times a month" has been found by the pilot study conducted by Agani (2010). To put these findings into perspective, the prevalence rates of bullying (both victimization and perpetration) were found to be lower when compared to studies conducted in Balkan countries or international studies (e.g., WHO, 2016). However, due to different methodological designs and conceptualization of bullying, comparisons of prevalence rates among countries should be examined with caution. Although it is premature to conclude that there has been an increase in bullying in Kosovar schools in recent years, as explored further below, this possibility is worth investigating through systematic longitudinal research.

Bullying victimization and gender. The estimates provided by national surveys (e.g., SCS, YRBS; & NatSCEV) in the U.S., have consistently documented that girls are more likely to report being bullied when compared to boys. However, somewhat different findings for gender

and bullying victimization were reported for European countries, where boys have been found to be more likely to report bullying victimization compared to girls in the majority of countries (Currie et al., 2010). The current study found no significant differences among boys and girls in the frequency with which they had been bullied.

Bullying perpetration and gender. With regard to bullying perpetration, most studies have found that boys are more likely than girls to bully others (Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon 1999; Brown et al., 2005; Chaux, Molana, & Podlesky, 2009; Cook, Williams, Guerra, & Kim, 2010; Craig & Pepler, 2003; Ma, 2002; Nansel et al., 2001). In line with these findings, the pilot study conducted by Agani (2010) in Kosovo, found that male students were involved in bullying others more often than female students within school environment. Consistent with findings from literature (e.g.,Brown et al., 2005; Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon 1999; Craig & Pepler, 2003; Cook, Williams, Guerra, & Kim, 2010; Chaux, Molana, & Podlesky, 2009; Ma, 2002; Nansel et al., 2001) and the pilot study by Agani (2010) this study found that boys perpetrate bullying more than girls.

Bullying victimization and grade level. Findings from the literature (e.g., Luxenberg, Limber, & Olweus, 2014) have emphasized that the likelihood of being bullied is more common in lower grades. Consistent with findings from literature, this study has documented that children from lower grades experience highert rates of bullying, when compared to children from higher grades.

Perpetration of bullying and grade level. Research on the prevalence of bullying perpetration across different grade levels are scarce. However, findings by Luxenberg, Limber, and Olweus (2014) indicated that the rates with which students bully others is fairly stable over grade levels (remaining between 4% and 6% between third and twelve grade). Consistent with

these findings, this study found a non-significant relationship between perpetration of bullying and grade level.

Bullying victimization and ethnicity. This study was especially innovative in exploring bullying victimization and ethnicity, since this relationship had not been explored in other studies conducted in Kosovo. This study found that Albanian children in Kosovo schools were more likely to experience bullying than Serbian children. Similarly, this finding was supported by previous study conducted by Agani (2010) with Albanian and Serbian children.

Several reasons might be attributed to this finding. First it should be taken into consideration the location of schools for Albanian and Serbian participants (urban vs. rural). During administration of the questionnaires, discrepancies in sizes of the classes were observed. Albanian classes were much more crowded (on average above 25 children per class) than Serbian classes (on average less than 20 children per class). It is conceivable that children who are part of smaller classes are more likely to have better relationships with their peers, compared to children in more crowded classes. Teachers in smaller classes may also be better able to prevent bullying, as they may be able to get to know their students better and have more effective supervision. Some researchers have found a positive association between class size and student victimization (Khoury-Kassabri, Benbenishty, Astor, & Zeira, 2004) although others have not (Coelho & Sousa, 2018). Future research is needed to further explore the association between class size and bullying. Finally, it is possible that Serbian children have more social cohesion due to the need for a collective resistance in the situation where the Serbian community perceives substantial loss from its pre-war status of privileged ethnic community. This also might help to explain the observed differences and warrants future exploration.

Perpetration of bullying and ethnicity. This study found a non-significant relationship between Albanian and Serbian participants in their perpetration of bullying. However, considering that the Western Balkans has been in conflict for decades and violence and aggressive behaviors are considered as a way of dealing with conflicts, it might be argued that violence within the families and education system is highly prevalent. Consequently, it might be hypothesized that children from both ethnicities would not differ in rates of perpetration of bullying. It is curious, however, that there were no differences in bullying perpetration among Albanian and Serbian students but there were differences in victimization among Albanian and Serbian students. It is possible that since Albanians constitute the majority ethnic group in Kosovo, there is increased sensitivity for reporting victimization by Albanian compared to Serbian participants. Finally, considering the repressive history that Albanians experienced before and after the war, it might be speculated that a victim mentality is still dominant among Albanians, which has been passed into their children. Future research is needed to further explore these possibilities.

Differences in Perceptions of School Safety by Demographic Information

Evidence from the literature has supported the association between peer victimization and bullying and children's perceptions of school safety (Musu et al., 2019). For example, findings from large-scale studies in the U.S. have found that students who report high levels of victimization also report lower perceptions of safety in schools (Musu et al., 2019; Nansel et al., 2001). Previous research has also investigated differences in children's perceptions of school safety by gender (e.g., Kann et al., 2018; Musu et al., 2019), grade (e.g., Gumpel et al., 2000; Musu et al., 2019; Varjas et al., 2007), and ethnicity (Musu et al., 2019; Kann et al., 2018).

In terms of gender, findings from the literature have documented that female students are

more likely than male students to avoid school due to being afraid of attack or harm at school (Kann, 2018). Children's age or grade level in school has also been found to predict how safe a child feels in a school environment. Quite a few studies have found that older children are more likely than younger children to perceive greater safety in schools (e.g., Gumpel & Meadan, 2000; Musu et al., 2019; Varjas, Christopher, Henrich, & Meyers, 2007). Race/ethnicity has also been recognized in the literature as a factor that predicts children's perceptions of safety within the school environment (Musu et al., 2019; Kann et al., 2018). Therefore, this study aimed to examine how Kosovo school children perceive their safety at school, and how their perceptions of safety varied as a function of gender, grade, and ethnicity.

Contrary to findings from the literature, the current study found no significant differences among the demographic groups in students' perceptions of safety. However, the findings are partially consistent with those by Agani (2010) in Kosovo with 247 Albanian and Serbian children between grades 6 and 9, which found no significant gender differences in students' perceptions of school safety and grade, but did find that Serbian students felt less safe in the school environment when compared to Albanians students. A possible explanation for null findings regarding perceptions of safety and ethnicity might be the improved overall safety in Kosovo school system especially for Albanian children and investment in infrastructure and monitoring mechanisms such as installed cameras on school property for Albanian schools.

Differences in Perceptions of School Climate by Demographic Information

The research literature has emphasized that positive school climate is associated with lower levels of peer victimization and bullying, and more positive perceptions of school safety (e.g., Cohen et al., 2009; Way, et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2010). Moreover, findings from research have consistently documented a relationship between school climate and individual variables

such as gender (e.g., Way, Reedy, & Rhodes, 2007; Koth, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2008), grade (e.g., Wang, Selman, Dishion, & Stormshak, 2010), age (Way, Reedy, & Rhodes, 2007; Wang, Selman, Dishion, & Stormshak, 2010), and race/ethnicity (Fan, Williams, & Marie-Corckin, 2011). Therefore, this study aimed to examine group differences in school climate among these key demographic variables within the Kosovo schools.

School climate and gender. Findings suggested no differences in boys' and girls' perceptions of school climate, as measured by disciplinary structure and perceptions of student support at school. It is unclear why there are no gender differences in students' perceptions disciplinary structure and perceptions of support at school, but these findings are encouraging.

School climate and age. Findings from the literature have documented that students' age is negatively associate with students' positive perceptions of school climate (Way, Reedy, & Rhodes, 2007; Wang et al., 2010). Contrary to expectations, findings from the current study suggested that children from higher grades were more likely to report positive disciplinary structure and perception of support, when compared to lower grades. Although it is not clear why this different pattern of results was found, it is noteworthy that researchers have found that children from higher grades are more likely to be subject to authoritative teaching, which has been found to be positively correlated with engagement, academic achievement, and lower rates of misbehavior (e.g., Baker, Clark, Crowl, & Carlson, 2009; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Walker, 2008), reduced level of violence (e. g., Brookmeyer, Fanti, & Henrich, 2006; Goldstain, Young, & Boyd, 2008; Karcher, 2002), bullying behaviors (e.g., Birkett et al., 2009; Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2008), and peer victimization (Cornell, Shukla, & Konold, 2015). Additional research is needed to examine the association between grade level and students' perceptions of school climate.

School climate and ethnicity. Contrary to expectations, this study found that Albanian children perceive more positive school climate (greater disciplinary structure and more student support) compared to Serbian children. One potential explanation might be the continual support from the international community that the Albanian educational system received for school infrastructure and training of school staff in post-war Kosovo. Although, similar supports were offered to Serbian schools, the general perception among the Serbian (which view itself as an endangered community) has over-shadowed these efforts, which have contributed to lower disciplinary structure and less student support in Serbian schools (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Kosovo [OSCE], 2009).

Associations among Peer Victimization, Bullying, School Safety, and School Climate

After examining demographic differences on the main constructs of this study, it was important to examine the relations among children's experiences of peer victimization, bullying, school safety, and school climate. Several key findings emerged.

Peer victimization and bullying. Evidence from numerous researchers has documented that a substantial number of youth are victimized and bullied in schools (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014; Musu, Zhang, Wang, Zhang, & Audekerk, 2019; National Academies, 2016) and that peer victimization and bullying victimization are positively associated (Astor, Guerra, & Van Acker, 2010; Goldweber, et al., 2013; Lleras, 2008; Hunter, Boyle, & Warden, 2007). Results of the current study also showed a significant positive association between peer victimization and bullying.

Contrary to expectations, significant positive associations were observed between bullying others and peer victimization as well as bullying others and bullying victimization. There is some evidence that a minority of children who are bullied also bully others (also

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referred to as bully-victims in the literature). For example, the National Academies (2016) noted that children who bully and are also bullied by others have also been found to have higher rates of aggression than children who were not involved in bullying.

Bullying others and school climate. There was a negative association between bullying others and perceptions of school climate, as expected and consistent with findings from literature (e.g., Kartal & Bilgin, 2006), but curiously, bullying others was not significantly associated with perceptions of school safety. It is possible that the increased power that perpetrators of bullying possess makes them feel safer at school.

Peer victimization, bullying, and school safety. Consistent with prior research, there were significant positive associations between peer victimization and bullying victimization, (e.g., Benbenishty & Astor, 2005). Moreover, both peer victimization and bullying victimization were negatively associated with school climate and perceptions of school safety. These findings are also consistent with the literature. For example, Williams, Shneider, Wornell, and Langhirchen-Rohling (2018) documented that perceptions of safety increased when students reported positive student and teacher relationships. Moreover, components of student support and disciplinary structure were found to predict children's perceptions of school safety.

The Moderating Role of Bullying Victimization by School Climate and School Safety

In the model predicting the association between bullying victimization and perceptions of school safety, results from linear regression analyses indicated that 24% of variance in this model was explained by experiencing bullying. Further, when analyzing individual predictors, perception of school safety was significantly negatively associated with bullying victimization, while school climate was also found to be negatively associated with experiences of bullying. Demographic variables did not predict bullying victimization.

Therefore, the hypothesis that school climate moderates the association between bullying victimization and perception of school safety was supported. When bullied students perceive a positive school climate, they feel safer at school, most likely because they feel that actions from school staff will be undertaken to address bullying behaviors within school context. Conversely, when bullied students perceive a negative school climate, they are more likely to feel unsafe at school, perhaps because of a lack of trust in the actions of staff and fellow students to help stop the bullying. Thus, positive school climate is important, as it decreases the chances for bullying victimization among children while simultaneously increasing perceptions of school safety among those students who are bullied.

Findings also suggest that school climate (as measured by greater disciplinary structure and student support) moderates the association between peer victimization and perceptions of school safety, while controlling for demographic variables. Thus, the hypothesis that school climate serves as moderation between peer victimization and perceptions of school safety was supported. Findings suggest that when the climate of a school is positive, students who are victimized by peers feel that they have a safe environment for reporting victimization at school. On the contrary, when the climate is negative, victimized students feel particularly at risk and decrease the chances for reporting positive perceptions of school safety. Therefore, these findings highlight the crucial role that school climate plays for students who are bullied or otherwise victimized by their peers.

Strengths of the Study

This study is among the first that responded to the very limited research on children's experiences of peer victimization, bullying, perceptions of school safety, and school climate in Kosovar schools, by exploring similarities and differences in the prevalence and forms of the

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above-mentioned variables among Albanian and Serbian children and the relationship between individual variables such as gender, grade, and ethnicity in relation to children's peer victimization, perceptions of school safety, school climate, and bullying. Further, this study was innovative in examining the variable of ethnicity in relation to above-mentioned variables.

Limitations

Despite these strengths, there are several limitations to this study. First, a convenience sample was used, which indicates that findings are relevant only to those four participating schools and cannot be generalized to other schools in Kosovo. Second, as Craig and colleagues (2009) have recognized, there are cultural differences regarding conceptualizations and definitions of bullying and peer victimization that may affect prevalence estimates. This might be a serious limitation of the current study, as the Balkan culture in general and Kosovar society in particular is unfamiliar with the term bullying. In the current study, it was observed that the Albanian translation of the term bullying was associated more with "teasing," while the Serbian translation of the term was associated more with "physical maltreatment," which could have led to over-and-under reporting of actual bullying behaviors among the participants. Third, reliance on self-reported student measures needs to be considered. Although self-reports are subject to over-and under-reporting of behavior, they have generally been found to be valid and reliable measures of these behaviors (Olweus et al., in press). A particular concern in the current study had to do with self-reports of ethnicity and religious affiliation of participants. Although the sample was almost equally divided between Albanians (Muslims) and Serbians (Christian–Orthodox), a higher percentage of students (72%) self-identified as Muslims. One possibility for this discrepancy is that students misidentified their ethnicity and/or religion. For example, some participants may have belonged to other ethnic groups that are typically Muslim (e.g., Roma,

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Ashkali, and Egyptians) but identified themselves as Serbians for security reasons. A fourth limitation of this study is that it was not able to include Serbian children in the 9th grade, due to differences in the educational systems for Serbian and Albanian students in Kosovo. This limitation particularly affected the comparisons between grades and ethnicity and may have biased the findings. Finally, this study used cross-sectional design to test constructs of interest and assumption of causality between variables of this study is not possible.

Future Research

Findings from this study have provided important information about children's experiences of peer victimization, bullying, perceptions of school safety, and school climate in Kosovo. Future research should explore these constructs across more representative and diverse samples by including other minorities such as Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, and Turks. Future studies should also include grades from elementary school (e. g., 4th and 5th), as findings from the literature have emphasized that children in these grades are more likely to experience peer victimization and bullying. More complex and advanced methodological designs, such as longitudinal studies and qualitative studies should be considered. Specifically, longitudinal research designs would be very valuable in understanding trends in bullying over time and in assessing short- and long-term effects of bullying on children and youth in Kosovo. Qualitative research methodology would provide an opportunity to more deeply explore the main constructs of this study from children's viewpoints. Moreover, recognizing the limitations of student self-report data, teachers' peers' and parents' perspectives could significantly contribute to better understanding of the constructs of interest.

More research is also needed within the Balkans for measuring children's experiences of peer victimization and bullying and their impact on mental health, physical, and academic

outcomes. Particularly, the impact that peer victimization and bullying have on children's mental health should be examined in future studies, by including clinical sample of children and longitudinal designs. Although there is extensive data from other countries on the deleterious effects of bullying and peer victimization, such research is scant in Kosovo. School-level variables (e.g., student-teacher ratio; location of schools; size of classes) and their relationship to peer victimization, bullying, and experiences of school safety should be further explored.

Implications for Policy and Practice

There are several important practical implications from these findings. First, this study provides a general description and explanation of phenomena such as peer victimization, bullying, perceptions of school safety, and school climate among Albanian and Serbian students in Kosovo. Findings are important for estimating the prevalence rates of peer victimization, bullying, and perceptions of school safety among the student population in Kosovo. Second, the measures used in this study have been widely used in other international studies, but their application has been limited in Kosovo. In this regard, this study provided validated instruments with reliable psychometric properties for other researchers in Kosovo and neighboring countries (e.g., Albania, Serbia, and Macedonia). Third, findings from this study may inform the development of local training for teachers and school staff on the prevalence of bullying and peer victimization and the importance of positive school climate, as measured by disciplinary structure and student support. Civil society organizations (e.g., Save the Children; Terre des Hommes; UNICEF) that work in child protection and advocate for children's rights in Kosovo, likely will find these results particularly useful in efforts to improve safety in schools. Findings of this study will be useful when these stakeholders conduct desk reviews, design research studies, and national reports; organize awareness workshops and campaigns with children and

teachers about peer victimization and bullying within school context; and arrange roundtables with professionals, lawmakers, and NGO stakeholders for child protection. Finally, results from this study may inform the design and implementation of prevention programs for children in Kosovo schools. Specifically, since the current study used the OBQ to measure bullying behaviors in schools, it might provide a good opportunity to establish contact between researchers in Kosovo and U.S., for the introduction of Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) within Kosovar schools. Not only has the OBPP been found to be effective in reducing bullying among children and youth (Limber, Olweus, Wang, Masiello, & Breivik, 2018), but this approach would further strengthen the ties between the research community in Kosovo and the U.S., for continued support in designing and conducting research in Kosovo.

Appendix A

Child Questionnaire

This is questionnaire is about children's exposure to peer victimization and perceptions of school safety. Your responses will help to better understand the nature and extent of this issue in Kosovo. **Do not put your name since this is anonymous, and therefore, answers will remain confidential. <u>Please remember that there is no right or wrong answer. Thank you.</u>**

This section has to do with basic demographic information. Please circle only one of the options.

1. How old are you? _____

2. Are you male or female?

      M
      F

3. What is your ethnicity?
      Albanian
      Serbian
      Turkish
      Bosnian
      Roman
      Other (please specify _____)

4. What is your religion?
      Muslim
      Christian
      Christian-Orthodox
      Other (please specify _____)

5. What grade are you in?
      6th
      7th
      8th
      9th

6. Does your family own a car, van, or truck?
      No
      Yes
      2 or more

7. Do you have your own bedroom for yourself?
      No
      Yes

8. During the past 12 months, how many times did you travel away on holiday (vacation)?
      Not at all
      Once
      Twice or more

9. How many computers does your family own?

    None

    1

    2 or more

Below is a list of things that some children do to other children. How often during the past month has another pupil done these things to you? Please answer by putting a tick in one of the three columns. **Please remember that there is no right or wrong answer.**

How often during the past month has another pupil done these things to you?	Not at all	Once	More than once
10. Punched me [a]			
11. Kicked me [a]			
12. Hurt me physically in some way [a]			
13. Beat me up [a]			
14. Called me names [b]			
15. Tried to get me into trouble with my friends [d]			
16. Made fun of me because of my appearance [b]			
17. Made fun of me for some reason [b]			
18. Tried to make my friends turn against me [d]			
19. Swore at me [b]			
20. Took something of mine without permission [c]			
21. Tried to break something of mine [c]			
22. Refused to talk to me [d]			
23. Stole something from me [c]			
24. Made other people not talk to me [d]			
25. Deliberately damaged some property of mine [c]			

The following questions will ask you about how you feel about your school and how students get along with one another and their teachers.

Thinking about your school, would you agree or disagree with the statements below?	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
26. The punishment for breaking school rules is the same for all students				
27. Students at this school only get punished when they deserve it				
28. Students are treated fairly regardless of their race or ethnicity				
29. Students get suspected without good reason				
30. The adults at this school are too strict				
31. The school rules are fair				
32. When students are accused of doing something wrong, they get a chance to explain it				

Most teachers and other adults at this school	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
33. Care about all students				
34. Want all students to do well				
35. Listen to what students have to say				
36. Treat students with respect				

How much do you agree or disagree with these statements?	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
37. There are adults at this school I could talk with if I had a personal problem				
38. If I tell a teacher that someone is bullying me, the teacher will do something to help				
39. I am comfortable asking my teachers for help with my school work				
40.There is at least one teacher or another adult at this school who really want				

me to do well				

These questions are about your general impressions of school safety. **<u>Please remember that there is no right or wrong answer.</u>**

How safe do you feel?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
41. I feel safe before and after school in school building					
42. I feel safe before and after school on school ground					
43. I feel safe on my way to and from school					
44. I feel safe in my lunchroom					
45. I feel safe in my classroom					
45. I believe that violent incidents do not occur at my school					
46. I feel that this is a safe school					
47. I am happy with the way my school is dealing with violence					
48. I feel safe in the bathroom					
49. I feel safe in the locker room					
50. I feel safe in the playground					

The next questions are about your life in school. There are several answers below each question. Answer each question by filling in the circle next to the answer that best describes how you think or feel. In the question below, if you really dislike school, fill in the circle next to "I dislike school very much." If you really like school, fill in the circle next to "I like school very much," and so on. **Fill in only one of the circle for each question. <u>Please remember that there is no right or wrong answer.</u>**

Fill in the circle next to the answer that best describes how you feel about school.
51. How do you like school?
      I dislike school very much
      I dislike school
      I neither like nor dislike school
      I like school
      I like school very much

52. How many good friend do you have in your class(es)?
> None
> I have 1 good friend in my class(es)
> I have 2 or 3 good friends in my class(es)
> I have 4 or 5 good friends in my class(es)
> I have 6 or more good friends in my class(es)

About being bullied by other students

Here are some questions about being bullied by other students. First we explain what is bullying is. We say **a student is being bullied when another student, or several other students**

- say mean and hurtful things, or make fun of him or her, or call him or her mean and hurtful names
- completely ignore or exclude him or her from their group of friends or leave him or her out of things on purpose
- hit, kick, push, shove around, or lock him or her inside a room
- tell lies or spread false rumors about him or her or send mean notes and try to make other students dislike him or her
- and do other hurtful things like that

When we talk about bullying, these things happen **more than just once,** and **it is difficult for the student being bullied to defend himself or herself.** We also call it bullying when a student is teased more than just once in a mean and hurtful way.

But we **do not call it bullying** when the teasing is done in a friendly and playful way. Also, it is not bullying when two students of about equal strength or power argue or fight.

53. How often have you **been bullied at school in the past couple of months**?
> I have not been bullied at school in the past couple of months
> It has only happened once or twice
> 2 or 3 times a month
> About one a week
> Several times a week

Have you been bullied at school in the past couple of months in one or more of the following ways?

54. I was called mean names, was made fun of, or teased in a hurtful way.
> It has not happened to me in the past couple of months
> Only once or twice
> 2 or 3 times a month
> About once a week
> Several times a week

55. Other students left me out of things on purpose, excluded me from their group of friends, or completely ignored me.
    It has not happened to me in the past couple of months
    Only once or twice
    2 or 3 times a month
    About once a week
    Several times a week

56. I was hit, kicked, pushed, shoved around, or locked indoors.
    It has not happened to me in the past couple of months
    Only once or twice
    2 or 3 times a month
    About once a week
    Several times a week

57. Other students told lies or spread false rumors about me and tried to make others dislike me.
    It has not happened to me in the past couple of months
    Only once or twice
    2 or 3 times a month
    About once a week
    Several times a week

58. I had money or other things taken away from me or damaged.
    It has not happened to me in the past couple of months
    Only once or twice
    2 or 3 times a month
    About once a week
    Several times a week

59. I was threatened or forced to do things I did not want to.
    It has not happened to me in the past couple of months
    Only once or twice
    2 or 3 times a month
    About once a week
    Several times a week

60. I was bullied with mean names or comments about my race or color.
    It has not happened to me in the past couple of months
    Only once or twice
    2 or 3 times a month
    About once a week
    Several times a week

61. I was bullied with mean names, comments, or gestures with a sexual meaning.
    It has not happened to me in the past couple of months
    Only once or twice
    2 or 3 times a month
    About once a week

Several times a week

61a. I was bullied with mean or hurtful messages, calls or pictures, or in other ways on my cell phone or over the Internet (computer). (Please remember that it is not bullying when it is done in a friendly and playful way.)

    It has not happened to me in the past couple of months
    Only once or twice
    2 or 3 times a month
    About once a week
    Several times a week

61b. If you were bullied on your cell phone or over the internet, how was it done?
    Only on the cell phone
    Only over the Internet
    In both ways

62. I was bullied in another way.
    It has not happened to me in the past couple of months
    Only once or twice
    2 or 3 times a month
    About once a week
    Several times a week

63. **In which class(es)** is the student or students who bully you?
    I have not been bullied at school in the past couple of months
    In my class
    In different class but the same grade (year)
    In a higher grade(s)
    In a lower grade(s)
    In both higher and lower grades

64. Have you been bullied by **boys or girls?**
    I have not been bullied at school in the past couple of months
    Mainly by 1 girl
    By several girls
    Mainly by 1 boy
    By several boys
    By both girls and boys

65. **By how many students** have you usually been bullied?
    I have not been bullied at school in the past couple of months
    Mainly by 1 student
    By a group of 2-3 students
    By a group of 4-9 students
    By a group of 10 or more students
    By several different students or groups of students

66. **How long** has the bullying lasted?
    I have not been bullied at school in the past couple of months
    It lasted 1 or 2 weeks
    It lasted about a month
    It lasted about 6 months
    It lasted about a year
    It lasted for several years

67. **Where** have you been bullied?
    I have not been bullied at school in the past couple of months
    I have been **bullied in one or more of the following places** in the past couple of months

    Please fill in the circles for all the places where you have been bullied:

    67a. On the playground/athletic field (during recess or break times)
    67b. In the hallways/stairwells
    67c. In class (when the teacher was in the room)
    67d. In class (when the teacher was **not** in the room)
    67e. In the bathroom
    67f. In gym class or the gym locker room/shower
    67g. In the lunchroom
    67h. On the way to and from school
    67i. At the school bus stop
    67j. On the school bus
    67k. Somewhere else at school

68. Have you **told anyone** that you have been bullied in the past couple of months?
    I have not been bullied at school in the past couple of moths
    I have been bullied, **but I have not told anyone**
    I have been bullied, and **I have told somebody about it**

    Please fill in the circles for all the people you have told:

    68a. Your class or homeroom teacher
    68b. Another adult at school
    68c. Your parent(s)/guardian(s)
    68d. Your brother(s) or sister(s)
    68e. Your friend(s)
    68f. Somebody else

69. How often do **the teachers or other adults at school** try to put a stop to it when a student is being bullied at school?
    Almost never
    Once in a while
    Sometimes
    Often
    Almost always

70. How often do **other students** try to put a stop to it when a student is being bullied at school?
    Almost never
    Once in a while
    Sometimes
    Often

71. Has **any adult at home** contacted the school to try to stop your being bullied at school in the past couple of months?
    I have not been bullied at school in the past couple of months
    No, they have not contacted the school
    Yes, they have contacted the school once
    Yes, they have contacted the school several times

72. When you see a student your age being bullied at school, what do you **feel or think?**
    That is probably what he or she deserves
    I do not feel much
    I feel a bit sorry for him or her
    I feel sorry for him or her and want to help him or her

About bullying other students

73. How often have you **taken part in bullying another student(s)** at school in the past couple of months?
    I have not bullied another student(s) at school in the past couple of moths
    It has only happened once or twice
    2 ore 3 times a month
    About once a week
    Several times a week

Have you bullied another student(s) at school in the past couple of months in one or more of the following ways?

74. I called another student(s) mean names and made fun or teased him or her in a hurtful way.
    It has not happened in the past couple of months
    Only once or twice
    2 or 3 times a month
    About once a week
    Several times a week

75. I kept him or her out of things on purpose, excluded him or her from my group of friends, or completely ignored him or her.
    It has not happened in the past couple of months
    Only once or twice
    2 or 3 times a month
    About once a week
    Several times a week

76. I hit, kicked, pushed, and shoved him or her around, or locked him or her indoors.
    It has not happened in the past couple of months

Only once or twice
2 or 3 times a month
About once a week
Several times a week

77. I spread false rumors about him or her and tried to make others dislike him or her.
It has not happened in the past couple of months
Only once or twice
2 or 3 times a month
About once a week
Several times a week

78. I took money or other things from him or her or damaged his or her belongings.
It has not happened in the past couple of months
Only once or twice
2 or 3 times a month
About once a week
Several times a week

79. I threatened or forced him or her to do things he or she did not want to do.
It has not happened in the past couple of months
Only once or twice
2 or 3 times a month
About once a week
Several times a week

80. I bullied him or her with mean names or comments about his or her race color.
It has not happened in the past couple of months
Only once or twice
2 or 3 times a month
About once a week
Several times a week

81. I bullied him or her with mean names, comments, or gestures with sexual meaning.
It has not happened in the past couple of months
Only once or twice
2 or 3 times a month
About once a week
Several times a week

81a. I bullied him or her with mean or hurtful messages, calls or pictures, or in   other ways on my cell phone or over the Internet (computer)
It has not happened in the past couple of months
Only once or twice
2 or 3 times a month
About once a week
Several times a week

81b. If you have bullied another student(s) on your cell phone or over the Internet (computer), how was it done?
Only on the cell phone
Only over the Internet
In both way

82. I bullied him or her in another way.
It has not happened in the past couple of months
Only once or twice
2 or 3 times a month
About once a week
Several times a week

83. Has your **class or homeroom teacher or any other teacher** talked with you about your bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months?
I have not bullied another student(s) at school on the past couple of months
No, they have not talked with me about it
Yes, they have talked with me about it once
Yes, they have talked with me about it several times

84. Has **any adult at home** talked with you about bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months?
I have not bullied another student(s) at school on the past couple of months
No, they have not talked with me about it
Yes, they have talked with me about it once
Yes, they have talked with me about it several times

85. Do you think you could join in bullying a student whom you do not like?
Yes
Yes, maybe
I do not know
No, I don't think so
No
Definitely no

86. How do you **usually react** if you see or learn that a student your age is being bullied by another student(s)?
I have never noticed that students my age have been bullied
I take part in the bullying
I do not do anything, but I think the bullying is okay
I just watch what goes on
I do not do anything, but I think I ought to help the bullied student
I try to help the bullied student in one way or another

87. How often are **you afraid of being bullied** by other students in your school?
Never
Seldom
Sometimes
Fairly often
Often

Very often

88. Overall, how much do you think **your class or homeroom teacher** has done to cut down on bullying in your classroom in the past couple of months?
    Little or nothing
    Fairly little
    Somewhat
    A good deal
    Much

Appendix B

Parent Permission Form

Clemson University

Children's Exposure to Peer Victimization, Bullying and their Perceptions of School Safety and School Climate among Kosovar and Serbian students in Kosovo

Description of the Research and Your Child's Part in It
Natyra Agani and Susan Limber are inviting your child to take part in a research study. Dr. Susan Limber is a professor at Clemson University. Natyra Agani is a student at Clemson University and also a faculty member at the University of Pristina. Ms. Agani is running this study with the help of Dr. Limber. The purpose of this study is to find out children's perceptions of peer victimization, bullying, their perception of school safety and school climate among Kosovar and Serbian students in the Republic of Kosovo.

Your child's part in this study will be to complete an anonymous questionnaire during school. Your child will answer questions about his or her experiences of violence at school, impressions of school safety, and experiences with and attitudes about bullying. It will take your child about 45 minutes to take part in this study. Please notify school administrators within one week if you do not want your child to take part in this study.

Risks and Discomforts
It is possible that some students might find questions about violence, bullying, and school safety to be sensitive, especially if they have experienced violence or bullying. However, in our extensive use of these questionnaires, we have almost never found any students to be troubled by these questions. You child will be reminded they can stop their participation if they become uncomfortable.

Ms. Agani is a licensed specialist in clinical psychology & psychotherapy from the Ministry of Health in Kosovo and works part-time as a clinical psychologist with children and adolescent. If there are any signs of distress from a participant during the completion of the questionnaire, he/she will be asked to stop filling the questionnaire. Ms. Agani will notify the school psychologist and administrator of the school. She also can offer a referral to the child's parents for a visit to a mental health practitioner.

Possible Benefits
We do not know of any way your child would benefit directly from taking part in this study. However, students may appreciate being asked their opinions about these issues in order to

improve conditions in the schools. This research may help us to better understand the extent of school violence and bullying in the Republic of Kosovo.

Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality
We will do everything we can to protect the confidentiality of the data. Your child's name will not appear anywhere on the questionnaire nor will he or she be asked to provide any information that would identify him or her. Your child's individual responses will be confidential and will not be shared with anyone. Questionnaires will be collected by Ms. Agani and not shared with personnel at the school.

We might be required to share the information we collect from your child with the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance and the U.S. federal Office for Human Research Protections. If this happens, the information would be only used to find out if we ran this study properly and protected your child's rights in the study. The results of this study may be published in scientific journals, professional publications, or educational presentations; however, no individual participant will be identified.

Choosing to Be in the Study
You do not have to let your child be in the study. You may tell us at any time that you do not want your child to be in the study anymore. Your child will not be punished in any way if you decide not to let your child be in the study or if you stop your child from continuing in the study. Your child's grades will not be affected by any decision you make about this study.

If you choose to have your child stop taking part in this study, the information your child has already provided will be used in a confidential manner.

We will also ask your child if they want to take part in this study. Your child will be able to refuse to take part or to quit being in the study at any time.

Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Natyra Agani at 049-183-156 or nagani@clemson.

Appendix C

Child Assent Form

Clemson University
Assent to Be in a Research Study

Children's Exposure to Peer Victimization, Bullying, Perceptions of School Safety and Schhool Climate among Kosovar and Serbian students in Kosovo

You are being invited to be in a research study by Natyra Agani and Susan Limber. Ms. Agani is a student at Clemson University and also a faculty member at the University of Pristina. Dr. Limber is a professor at Clemson University. Below you will find answers to some of the questions that you may have.

Why are we conducting this research?
We are going to do a research study at your school to learn more about peer victimization, bullying, and student's views of school safety and school climate. Your answers will help us to better understand student's ideas about these important issues.

What will I have to do?
A pencil-and-paper questionnaire will be given to you during one class period, and it should take about 45 minutes to complete it. During that time, a researcher (Natyra Agani) will be in the room to help distribute and collect the questionnaires. No teachers or parents will be present during the research. Your individual responses will not be shared with teachers or school administrators.

Are there any potential harms or risks if I take part in the research?
We do not think you will experience any harms or risks if you take part in this study. It is possible that some of the questions may make you feel a bit uncomfortable. If this is the case, you may stop at any time.

Are there any benefits if I take part in the research?
By filling out this questionnaire you will be able to explain your opinions about school violence, bullying, and school safety. You may feel good about being able to share your ideas. This information will help us to better understand how children in the Republic of Kosovo feel about these important issues.

Do I have to take part in the research?

You do not have to take part in the research. If you want to stop at any time, you may and you will not get into any trouble with the researchers or teachers or principal at your school. Your grades will not be affected by any decision you make about taking part in this study.

What if I have questions?

You can ask questions at any time during the research. If you have questions later, you can call Natyra Agani at 049-183-156 or email Ms. Agani at nagani@clemson.edu.

Appendix D

Study Information Letter

May 2018

Dear Parent,

Natyra Agani will conduct a study in the Republic of Kosovo during (Dates will be added), under the supervision of Dr. Susan P. Limber from Clemson University, SC, USA. The purpose of this study is to examine the extent of peer victimization, bullying, and children's perceptions of school safety and school climate. As a result of very limited research in the field of peer victimization and bullying in Kosovo, this study is going to be among the first.

Attached, you will find a parental permission form, which provides detailed information about the study, and a child/minor assent form. You can decide to withdraw your child from this study at any time without being penalized. Your child can also withdraw from the study at any time without being penalized. If you do not want your child or your child does not want to take part in this study, please notify the school administrators by (Date will be added) that your child will not participate.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact me at 049-183-156 or e-mail: NAGANI@clemson.edu. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Susan P. Limber, PhD
Professor
Clemson University

Natyra Agani
Graduate Research Assistant
Clemson University

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