



L-Università ta' Malta
Centre for Resilience &
Socio-Emotional Health

International
Journal of
Emotional
Education

ISSN: 2073 7629

Volume 12, Number 2, November 2020 pp 1 - 7

www.um.edu.mt/ijee

Editorial

In this edition we have an interesting collection of thematic papers, other papers and a short research report and a book reviews section. We have three thematic papers on the theme *School design, climate and safety: strategies for anti-bullying interventions and inclusiveness* guest edited by our colleagues, Professor Muthanna Samara and Professor Peter Smith. The three papers are discussed in detail below by Professor Samara and Professor Smith; we would like to thank them both for their work and effort in this regard.

In the first of the other papers, Kumschick, Thiel, Goschin and Froehlich (Germany) discuss the relationship between mood and decision making in the teaching process in initial teacher education. They report that after the completion of their internship, preservice teachers reported a significant increase in the three dimensions of their teaching performance, namely planning, teaching and reflecting. They also found that negative mood predicts the processes of planning and reflecting following the internship, but had no effect on the actual teaching of the lesson. They conclude that initial teacher education programmes need to particularly address negative mood as it significantly impacts teaching competences during teaching practice and consequently the quality of teaching in schools.

In another paper on mood amongst university students, Alonso-Tapia, Abello and Panaderoc (Spain/Colombia) adapted, and tested the psychometric properties of, the Emotions and Motivation Self-Regulation Questionnaire in different cultural contexts and age groups, and examined the relationship between self-regulation and academic performance. They reported that negative self-regulation of stress and avoidance-oriented self-regulation are negatively related to academic performance.

In the third paper on the process of responsible decision making as school children move from primary to secondary school, Dotsenko, Startseva, Pchelina, Karaberova and Ivantsova (Russia) discuss the use of Vygotsky's theory of cultural and historical development to examine how the process of a child's internalization of interpersonal dialogue is used as a means of making responsible decisions. They reported an increase in the level of maturity of responsible decisions in children aged 6 to 11-year-old and that the primary

school age is the optimal time for the formation of internal dialogue as a cultural means of searching for, selecting and making responsible decisions.

In the final short research report on the relationship between gratitude, happiness and resilience in young people, Llenares, Deocaris, Espanola and Sario (Philippines) found that happiness and gratitude both predicted resilience, and that gratitude moderates the relationship between happiness and resilience, supporting existing evidence that positive emotions generated by gratitude and happiness help to foster resilience.

Finally, we would like to thank Professor Helen Cowie for another interesting and useful book reviews section.

Paul Cooper and Carmel Cefai, Editors
November 2020

Thematic Papers

School design, climate and safety: strategies for anti-bullying interventions and inclusiveness

Muthanna Samara, Kingston University London, and Peter K Smith, Goldsmiths College, University of London, UK.

Bullying behaviour is a systematic abuse of power in which repetitive actions with the intention of hurting another person involving an imbalance of power (Olweus, 1999). Prevalence rates of bullying and cyberbullying vary worldwide depending on how bullying is perceived and measured (Foody et al., 2017). Bullying and victimization have been found to be related to mental health problems, poor physical health, and suicidal ideation (Moore et al., 2017). These relationships may also vary across different ethnic groups and countries (Yuchang et al., 2019) depending on differences in beliefs, attitudes, values, language and the way the researchers measure and assess bullying (Samara et al., 2019; Scheithauer et al., 2016). These factors may also differ from school to another depending on various aspects including school design, school and educational climate, and how safe pupils feel in their schools (Astor & Benbenishty, 2019).

The thematic papers in this edition focus on studies devoted to the importance role of school design in improving school safety, climate and security and their effects on bullying, absence from school and inclusion of children from different backgrounds (e.g., migrants, refugees; Samara et al., 2020); and on the importance of practitioners who work directly with pupils in the design of bullying interventions and policies. There is also a need for innovative anti-bullying interventions and data collection methods based on school design and safety. The collection of three thematic papers in this section represents innovative and international research in the importance of school design and safety, as well as practitioners' central role in tackling bullying and/or cyberbullying, taking into account different research methods and approaches. The collection has data sets from three countries, reflecting different school ethos and cultures.

The first thematic article by Samara et al. (UK/Qatar) investigates the perceptions, attitudes, and challenges towards bullying amongst 135 practitioners (psychologists, social-workers, and medical professionals) in Qatar. This study aimed to explore and understand practitioners' awareness and perceptions of the concepts, characteristics, prevalence, causes, consequences, interventions in the school environment, as well as the legal implications of bullying and cyberbullying. The findings revealed that practitioners have a clear understanding of the definition, causes, and consequences of bullying and recognise bullying and cyberbullying as a problem in Qatari schools. More knowledge and experience concerning bullying behaviour were related to higher perception of bullying as a problematic behaviour, better identification of bullying characteristics, more support of anti-bullying laws, and more bullying guidelines in their workplace. This research is vital due to the lack of studies worldwide in this area and specifically in Qatar (Samara & El Asam, 2021). In Qatar, the proportion of schools that employ anti-bullying policies is undocumented while the behavioural policy designed by the Ministry of Education does not cover some important areas and its use and effectiveness are not known (Samara & El Asam, 2021).

According to this study, practitioners in Qatar have good knowledge of bullying and cyberbullying, although this did not seem to vary according to their professional role. Furthermore, practitioners with more knowledge of and experience with bullying tended to see bullying as more problematic, and they were more likely to endorse bullying laws. Practitioners are aware of the characteristics of bullying, including both its definition and where bullying may occur. In turn, while practitioners were quite good at identifying bullying scenarios, many confused random aggressive acts with bullying. Thus, there is a need for a clear definition of bullying as well as how it is perceived by children and adults to better understand the dynamics and their use in anti-bullying interventions (Samara & El Asam, 2021). Practitioners had a good understanding of the consequences of victimisation to have internalising problems (Foody et al., 2020). Parents and the Ministry of Education are the parties that should play part in combating bullying and that bullies and parents should be held responsible according to practitioners. According to the practitioners, school interventions with teachers and parental awareness are the highest rated ways of tackling bullying. In addition, they mostly support anti-bullying and cyberbullying laws. More knowledge of bullying and practical experience with bullying situations may make practitioners more aware of the problematic nature of bullying and, thus, make them more supportive of actions to reduce bullying among youth. This study indicates that there is a need for clear anti-bullying guidelines and for practitioner training as part of their professional development in order to have successful bullying interventions in schools (Samara et al., 2017). This is the first study in Qatar that looks at the perceptions, attitudes and challenges around bullying and cyberbullying among practitioners working with children. There is an essential need for a separate and unique anti-bullying policy in schools and organisations that work with children and for practitioners to be trained in the implementation and use of these policies (Samara & El Asam, 2021).

The second thematic paper by Flores-Verduzco, Fraijo-Sing and Tapia-Fonllem (Mexico) shows that there is a significant mediation effect of school environment on the relationship between Family Support and

Social Wellbeing amongst 265 high school students in Mexico. In their study they found that family support including motivation, supporting their educational achievement, and listening to their children was an essential part of positive social wellbeing (King, et al., 2017; Miranda et al., 2019), while positive school environment including school functioning, teaching practice and social relationships can affect social wellbeing of children. This can facilitate having a secure environment and preventing school bullying and violence (Varela et al., 2019). This study is timely as there are limited studies in Mexico on the causes of violence and bullying (Naciones Unidas México, 2019) and previous studies did not take into account these important school environment factors on the social wellbeing of children in schools. Parental involvement has been found to be essential in reducing bullying and victimization rates (Lereya et al., 2013) and mental health problems (Boutelle et al., 2009) through providing emotional protection and support (Mata et al., 2018).

The study is cross-sectional and thus no causal relationship to be concluded from the results; it also has a small sample size. However, it is done in Mexico where there is little research on bullying and school factors. The study also emphasizes the importance of school climate, design and atmosphere and the importance of parental involvement on the social wellbeing of students. Future interventions in Mexico can benefit from the results of this study to enhance children's school experience and reduce the risk of bullying. In addition, teaching practice was found to be associated with school functioning and the social relationships within the school. Thus, teachers need to develop strategies based on these results to motivate children and learn skills on how to solve behavioural problems that appear in the classroom.

The third thematic paper by Horton, Forsberg and Thornberg (Sweden) included a qualitative study exploring teachers' perspectives on spatiality, school design and school bullying in Sweden. The findings are based on participant observations and semi-structured interviews with different members of staff (six members of two school safety teams, one member of a student health team, and 21 teachers for preschool children ages 5-13). The findings demonstrate that environmental, social and structural elements of school spaces affect both social relations between students and teachers' ability to prevent school bullying. The study focusses on the importance of looking beyond the issue of supervision in schools and considering in more detail the ways in which spatiality and school design influence school bullying and preventative work in schools. The findings suggest that the spatial specificities of school design not only influence the occurrence of negative interactions but also restrict the ability of teachers to prevent school bullying. For example, teachers pointed to environmental elements (such as size and diversity, architectural design), social elements (such as collaboration, competition and conflict), and structural elements (such as lack of teacher presence, staffing and scheduling) of school space. In addition, some teachers pointed to the importance of school size for the social relations between students. For instance, some schools were not designed for the large number of students that they currently accommodating. The same issues were raised about schoolyards and cloakrooms that are sometimes relatively small, and teachers perceived it to be a crowded space that encouraged conflicts and thus they proposed to have a larger area to reduce the number of conflicts. These also need to accommodate and

reflect the diverse needs of students. Some teachers also pointed out on the importance of social elements of school spaces and the need for various activities and supervision.

The three studies presented indicate the importance of school design, climate and atmosphere on the social relationships between children and adolescents. They also emphasise on the importance of practitioners who work with children, including teachers, psychologists, social workers and medical professionals on having knowledge about bullying and victimisation and know how to deal with them. There is a great need for practitioner training as well as appropriate anti-bullying policies and intervention that are designed to suit the needs of each school. It is essential to involve children and adolescents as well as practitioners in the process of designing these policies and interventions, and in their implementation. School environment is an important aspect in improving the social wellbeing of children and these include the physical building, buildings and playgrounds that have enough space and variety of activities that reflect the diversity of students' backgrounds, supervised corridors and risky spots, staffing and scheduling, teaching practice and curriculum. Parental and children's involvement in the design of the school environment is essential. Schools need to take these into account when designing their anti-bullying policies or when tackling bullying (Samara & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2012). In addition, schools should have a specific system to conduct a thorough safety assessment of their premises and monitoring procedures. These could be included in their anti-bullying policies.

References

- Astor, R. A. & Benbenishty, R. (2019). *Bullying, school violence, and climate in evolving contexts: Culture, organization, and time*. Oxford University Press.
- Boutelle, K., Eisenberg, M., Gregory, M., & Neumark-Sztainer, D. (2009). The reciprocal relationship between parent-child connectedness and adolescent emotional functioning over 5 years. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 66(4), 309–316. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychores.2008.10.019>
- Foody, M., Samara, M. & O'Higgins Norman, J. (2017). Bullying and cyberbullying studies in the school-aged population on the island of Ireland: A meta-analysis. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 87(4), 535-557. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12163>.
- Foody, M., Samara, M. & O'Higgins Norman, J. (2020). Bullying by siblings and peers: Poly-setting victimization and the association with problem behaviours and depression. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90, 138–157.
- King, V., Boyd, L., & Pragg, B. (2017). Parent-adolescent closeness, family belonging, and adolescent well-being across family structures. *Journal of Family Issues*, 39(7), 2007–2036. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X17739048>
- Lereya, S., Samara, M., & Wolke, D. (2013). Parenting behavior and the risk of becoming a victim and a bully/victim: A meta-analysis study. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 37(12), 1091-1108. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2013.03.001>.

- Mata, L., Pedro, I., & Peixoto, F. (2018). Parental support, student motivational orientation and achievement: The impact of emotions. *International Journal of Emotional Education*, 10(2), 77-92. <https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/123456789/36559/1/v10i2p5.pdf>
- Miranda, R., Oriol, X., Amutio, A., & Ortúzar, H. (2019). Adolescent bullying victimization and life satisfaction: Can family and school adult support figures mitigate this effect? *Revista de Psicodidáctica*. 24(1), 39-45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psicod.2018.07.001>
- Moore, S. E., Norman, R. E., Suetani, S., Thomas, H. J., Sly, P. D., & Scott, J. G. (2017). Consequences of bullying victimization in childhood and adolescence: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *World Journal of Psychiatry*, 7(1), 60-76. <https://doi.org/10.5498/wjp.v7.i1.60>
- Naciones Unidas México. (July 11, 2019). *Contar con datos estadísticos sobre violencia contra la infancia es indispensable para erradicarla*. <https://www.onu.org.mx/contar-con-datos-estadisticos-sobre-violencia-contra-la-infancia-es-indispensable-para-erradicarla/>
- Olweus, D. (1999). Sweden. In Smith, P. K., Morita, Y., Junger-Tas, J., Olweus, D., Catalano, R. & Slee, P. (Eds.), *The nature of school bullying: A cross-national perspective* (pp. 7-27). Routledge.
- Samara, M., Burbidge, V., El Asam, A., Foody, M., Smith, P. K., & Morsi, H. (2017). Bullying and cyberbullying: Their legal status and use in psychological assessment. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 14(12), 1449. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14121449>
- Samara, M. & El Asam, A. (2021). Bullying research and intervention in the Arab world. In Smith, P. K. & O'Higgins Norman, J. (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Bullying: A Comprehensive and International Review of Research and Intervention*. Wiley.
- Samara, M., El Asam, A., Khadaroo, A. & Hammuda, S. (2020). Examining the psycho-social wellbeing of refugee children in the UK. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90(2), 301-329. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12282>.
- Samara, M., Foody, M., Göbel, K., Altawil, M., & Scheithauer, H. (2019). Do cross-national and ethnic group bullying comparisons represent reality? Testing instruments for structural equivalence and structural isomorphism. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 1621-1621. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01621>
- Samara, M. & Smith, P. (2008). How schools tackle bullying, and the use of whole school policies: Changes over the last decade. *Educational Psychology*, 28(6), 663-676.
- Scheithauer, H., Smith, P. K. & Samara, M. (2016). Cultural Issues in Bullying and Cyberbullying among Children and Adolescents: Methodological Approaches for Comparative Research. *International Journal of Developmental Science* 10, 3–8. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3233/DEV-16000085>
- Smith, P. K., Kupferberg, A., Mora-Merchan, J. A., Samara, M., Bosley, S., & Osborn, R. (2012). A content analysis of school anti-bullying policies: A follow-up after six years. *Educational psychology in practice*, 28(1), 47-70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2011.639344>

- Varela, J., Sirlopú, D., Melipillán, R., Espelage, D., Green, J., & Guzmán, J. (2019). Exploring the influence school climate on the relationship between school violence and adolescent subjective well-being. *Child Indicators Research*, *12*, 2095–2110. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-019-09631-9>
- Yuchang, J., Junyi, L., Junxiu, A., Jing, W., & Mingcheng, H. (2019). The differential victimization associated with depression and anxiety in cross-cultural perspective: A meta-analysis. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, *20*(4), 560-573. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838017726426>