

Shared concern is half the concern: satisfaction with classmates and life as a student among the Estonian and Finnish children who have experienced bullying at school

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Thematic importance: Every child has a right to feel safe at school but despite that, many children experience bullying in school more or less regularly and feel themselves unsafe at school. Feeling of safety is a fundamental human right and the source of children's subjective wellbeing. Bullying at school, on the other hand, is a risk for students' mental and physical wellbeing and learning outcomes.

Introduction and objectives: In our paper, we study the relationship between bullying and satisfaction with life as a student and satisfaction with classmates. As it is known that the support of classmates and the opportunity to share their burden with someone help victims of bullying, it can be assumed that students who experience not only bullying but also the support from classmates, teachers or family members are more satisfied with their school life than bullied students who do not have such support. The existence of supportive relationships in one or more domains could act as a buffer preventing some of the negative consequences of bullying. Therefore, we test a hypothesis that students who have experienced bullying but have also received help from significant others (classmates, teachers or family members) are more satisfied with their lives as students and with their classmates than those who are alone with their problems.

Method: We use the third wave data of Children's Worlds study from 12-year old Estonian and Finnish children (N=1079+1075). Cluster sampling of schools is representative to all 12-year old children in Estonia and Finland. ANOVA is used to find out how the experiences of school bullying and receiving help and support at school and at home affects the level of satisfaction with classmates and life as a student in general in children.

Results: 71% of 12-year-old children in Estonia and 52% in Finland have experienced bullying in the last month. While most of the children in our sample receive help from their families in

case of trouble, less than third 12-year-olds assess that they always receive help from teachers when they have some worries at school. The help from classmates is even rarer. The analysis reveals experiencing bullying reduces the satisfaction with life as a student and with classmates, whereas receiving help from significant others increases satisfaction with both these aspects of school life. In addition, receiving help acts as a mediating factor which helps to buffer negative effects of bullying to some extent.

Conclusions and implications: As the supportive relationships are so important in buffering some of the negative effects of school bullying, children with weak support networks need attention. The lack of close, trusting and supportive relationships leaves a child vulnerable to threats such as bullying at school.

Key words: bullying, subjective wellbeing, vulnerability, school satisfaction