

Title: Parental Locus of Control and Discipline Practices: Relationship to Bullying and Victimization Experiences of Elementary School Students

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Abstract

**PARENTAL LOCUS OF CONTROL AND DISCIPLINE PRACTICES: RELATIONSHIP TO BULLYING AND VICTIMIZATION EXPERIENCES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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Bullying represents a serious problem for schools across the world. The present study attempts to examine the role of parents in the occurrence of such behaviors in the school context. Specifically it investigates the association between bullying and victimization experiences among 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade elementary school students and characteristics of their parents including parental locus of control and child discipline approaches. Students completed in class a measure of bullying, victimization and self-esteem, based on well established questionnaires, and were asked to take home another questionnaire for their parents. This included the Parental Locus of Control scale and a measure of the methods used by parents to discipline their children. One hundred and eighty seven children and 158 parents completed the respective measures. Results from the child measure show that there is a significant correlation between bullying and victimization experiences, indicating that these distributions greatly overlap. For this reason, children were divided into bullies only, victims only, bully-victims and uninvolved based on median splits of the bullying and victimization score distributions. Parental discipline practices were reduced into three meaningful categories based on factor analysis, namely, “setting clear rules”, “punishing” and “inconsistent practices.” Parents of bullies relied less on setting clear rules in their discipline practices compared to the other 3 groups, and parents of victims reported more inconsistent practices in their discipline methods compared to parents of bullies. Bullies also had significantly higher self-esteem than both bully-victims and victims. Results show that parental discipline practices and child personality characteristics may be important predictors of bullying and victimization experiences in the school.