

# Sibling and School Bullying Victimization and Its Relation With Children's Subjective Well-Being in Indonesia: The Protective Role of Family and School Climate

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## Abstract

Studies on the influence of family and school climates on the relationships between sibling and school bullying victimization and children's subjective well-being (SWB) in Indonesia are still scarce. The aims of this study are to investigate family and school climates as protective factors for children from the negative consequences of bullying by siblings or other children in school on SWB. The study used the third-wave data of the Children's Worlds survey that was collected in Indonesia in October 2017. Participants of the study were children aged 10 and 12 years old ( $N = 15,604$ ; 49.8% girls, 50.2% boys, Mean age = 10.55;  $SD = 1.17$ ). There are four questionnaires used in the study: five items measure bullying at home and at school, the Children's Worlds Subjective Well-Being Scale, six items measure family climate, and

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four items measure school climate. Data were analyzed using R and the lavaan library for multilevel structural equation modeling, using full information maximum likelihood (FIML) for missing data and robust maximum likelihood (ML) estimation. Results showed that children who experienced bullying incidents, both at home by siblings and at school, predicted lower levels of SWB. School climate and family climate predicted higher levels of SWB. Results also showed that school bullying interacted significantly with school climate, while sibling bullying interacted significantly with family climate. Schools with students that reported more positive levels of family climate also reported higher levels of SWB. Students from public schools reported higher levels of SWB, which is unexpected.

### **Keywords**

bullying victimization, family climate, school bullying, sibling bullying, school climate, Indonesia

Bullying has been a severe problem for children worldwide. Olweus (1978) initiated a study of bullying when he wrote a book about bullying in Scandinavian countries entitled *Aggression in the School: Bullies and Whipping Boys*. His book brought great insight into the problems of school bullying. Since then, school bullying studies have increased enormously over the past 40 years (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Smith et al., 2002; Thornberg et al., 2020; Volk et al., 2017; Zych et al., 2017). However, there are still limited studies on sibling bullying (Dantchev & Wolke, 2019b; Menesini et al., 2010; Wolke et al., 2015) and mainly focused on adolescents (Dantchev & Wolke, 2019a; Dantchev et al., 2018) rather than on children under 12 years old.

Smith and Berkkun (2020) argued for the importance of giving contextual details when reporting bullying studies, including characteristics of participants (age and gender), the country in which data were gathered, and the year in which it was gathered. These contexts are essential since most studies on bullying focus on Western countries, although bullying is widely recognized as an international problem (Smith & Toda, 2016). Regarding the importance of context, it is suggested to investigate the influence of family and school climates on bullying victimization (Hong & Espelage, 2012). Aligned with Hong and Espelage (2012), Smith et al. (2018) suggested five factors explaining country differences in bullying involvement: cultural values, education system, technological infrastructure, regulatory framework, and socioeconomic stratification.

Most studies on bullying focused on the predictors of school bullying incidents, and very few studies focused on protective factors of school bullying incidents (Zych et al., 2019, 2021) and sibling bullying incidents

(Dantchev & Wolke, 2019b). Furthermore, there are also comparatively few studies that investigate the correlation between these protective factors and subjective well-being (SWB; Varela et al., 2019, 2020).

SWB is an important aspect of children's and adolescent's development. Studies in multiple countries have shown that bullying affects the SWB of children and adolescents (Borualogo & Casas, 2021b, 2021c, 2022; Savahl et al., 2019; Tiliouine, 2015; Varela et al., 2019, 2020). Many aspects of life affect the SWB of children and adolescents, including family, school, and community (Lee & Yoo, 2014). Casas (2016) stated three strong predictors of children's SWB: bullying, perception of safety, respect for children, and inclusion of their voices. Aligned with Casas' statement (2016), children who experienced being bullied displayed significantly lower SWB scores than those who had never been bullied (Borualogo & Casas, 2021b, 2021c, 2022; Savahl et al., 2019; Tiliouine, 2015; Varela et al., 2019, 2020).

Studies on protective factors of bullying, such as family and school climates, on the relationships between sibling and school bullying victimization and children's SWB are still limited (Varela et al., 2019, 2020). Moreover, there is no such study in Indonesia, even though bullying is a severe problem for Indonesian children. This study will address this gap by focusing on family climate and school climate as protective factors of bullying victimization—sibling and school bullying—in children aged 10- and 12 year olds in Indonesia, a very relevant but under-researched non-Western context.

### *Indonesian Context*

Bullying incidents in Indonesia frequently happen with a quite high prevalence. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report revealed that Indonesia is among the top five countries that display the highest percentage of school bullying incidents (Schleicher, 2018). The PISA report showed that 41% of Indonesian students reported being bullied at least a few times a month (Schleicher, 2018). The Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) reported that 56% of Indonesian children (aged 11–15 years old) had been bullied at school (Mullis et al., 2016). Although the rate of bullying incidents in Indonesia is high (Borualogo & Gumilang, 2019) and among the highest in Asia (OECD, 2019, 2023), bullying is still under study. The lack of bullying research in Indonesia is disappointing (Sittichai & Smith, 2015).

The educational system in Indonesia is divided into three levels of education: primary, secondary, and higher education (Borualogo & Casas, 2021b). Children in primary schools are 7 to 12 years old, in junior high schools are 13 to 15 years old, and in senior high school are 16 to 18 years old. There are four types of schools, which are public, private, religious-based, and

non-religious-based school. Public schools most likely have more students in a class with only one teacher, while private schools have fewer students but more classes at the same grade. Religious-based schools have more local content on certain religious subjects, while non-religious-based schools only have religious content, such as the curriculum delivered by the Ministry of Education. Most religious-based schools in Indonesia are Islamic and Christianity religious-based schools.

School bullying is prevalent in Indonesia and mass media reports indicate a high incidence of bullying (Aranditio, 2024; Masyrafina & Alamsyah, 2023; Rosa, 2023). However, there is no literature or scientific research show that bullying occurs in certain types of schools. In response to the high incidence of bullying in schools, through the Minister of Education and Culture the Indonesian government implemented regulation number 82 of 2015 to prevent and control acts of violence and bullying in schools. This regulation and law showed that Indonesian government was paying serious attention to bullying prevention (Borualogo & Casas, 2022b).

Indonesian value of rukun (Koentjaraningrat, 1985)—means living in harmony—does not imply everything is in total harmony. Sibling bullying incidents—particularly being hit by sibling—more frequently happen than by other children at school (Borualogo & Casas, 2021b, 2022b). The National Child Protection Commission stated that the most serious cases of violence toward children were happening at home (Tim KPAI, 2020). Children do not have any formal channel to report their bullying experiences at home (Borualogo & Casas, 2022b).

A recent study in Indonesia revealed that not getting along well with friends, frequent fights between children at school, and frequent arguments between children in the class are predictors that increase the probability of children being victimized (Borualogo et al., 2024). The highest frequency of school bullying incidents was observed in public and non-religious schools in Indonesia (Borualogo et al., 2024). Children reported that teachers were not aware of school bullying incidents (Borualogo & Gumilang, 2019), at least not until the incidents got more serious and children got injured. Children also reported they lacked the courage to tell parents and teachers when they were victims (Borualogo & Gumilang, 2019). They were worried about getting into more problems if they reported the incidents to parents or teachers. Another study in Indonesia using a smaller sample ( $N=809$ ) showed that the father's unavailability increased the probability of children being victimized (Borualogo et al., 2020). Warm fathers and mothers contributed significantly and directly to the SWB of children uninvolved in bullying (Borualogo & Casas, 2021a).

## *Family Climate*

Tucker et al. (2020) argued that sibling and school bullying victimization experiences are related, and appear to share common family roots (e.g., family climate and parent-child relationships). The family context is central to children's lives and can form the foundation for how children interact with others (Tucker et al., 2020). However, according to Tucker et al. (2020), studies have yet to investigate whether family climate predicts both bullying victimization at home and in school.

An international comparative study using data from the pilot study of the International Survey of Children's Well-Being (ISCWeB) showed that family, school, and community lives significantly affect the level of children's SWB (Lee & Yoo, 2014). Family activities, frequency of peer activities, and safety feelings in the area where children live are most consistently related to the level of children's SWB across these multinational countries' comparison (Lee & Yoo, 2014). However, this study did not include Indonesia in the analysis; therefore, it is interesting to examine whether these factors show a similar effect, particularly in the context of being bullied by siblings and other children at school.

A study in Taiwan showed that family climate has an indirect link with school bullying victimization through relationships with teachers and peers (Chen et al., 2020). Specifically, students from homes with a favorable climate are more likely to have good relationships with teachers and other children. As a result, their risk of being exposed to school bullying is lower (Chen et al., 2020).

Being listened to by parents and considering what children say is one of the strong predictors of children's SWB (Casas, 2016). Several studies have shown the importance of parents listening to their children in warm communication (Borualogo, 2021; Borualogo & Casas, 2021a) and how this feeling of being adequately heard by parents contributes to children's SWB (Borualogo, 2021; Corominas et al., 2020; Savahl et al., 2020).

## *School Climate*

A cross-cultural comparison study across Chile and South Africa showed the indirect effect of school climate on the SWB of children being bullied (Varela et al., 2020). This study explains the importance of schools in fostering children's social development by promoting school climate (Varela et al., 2020). A negative school climate has been identified as a risk factor for school bullying victimization (Chun et al., 2020; Dorio et al., 2019; Espelage & Hong, 2019; Konishi et al., 2017; Yang et al., 2020). A negative school climate reduces

students' feeling of safety in their school (Espelage et al., 2000; Goldweber et al., 2013). In contrast, friend support can protect children from being victimized at school (Alcantara et al., 2017). Children who are very satisfied with their life as students have more confidence in receiving support from their classmates if they have a problem at school (Corominas et al., 2022). Positive interpersonal relationships at school in which students and teachers intervene to stop aggressive behaviors yield less bullying (Konstantina & Piliou-Dimitris, 2010) and positively impact children's SWB (Varela et al., 2020).

### ***Sibling Bullying Victimization***

Our literature review revealed very few studies on sibling bullying victimization (Dantchev & Wolke, 2019a, 2019b; Dantchev et al., 2018). Some researchers do not agree with the term and definition of sibling bullying (Ensor et al., 2010; Goodwin & Roscoe, 1990; Krienert & Walsh, 2011,) and instead use the term antisocial behavior among siblings (Ensor et al., 2010), sibling aggression (Tucker et al., 2013), or sibling abuse (Goodwin & Roscoe, 1990). Aggressive behaviors among siblings involve systematic abuses of power (Rigby, 2002), intentional aggressive action to which children are exposed repeatedly and over time and cannot defend themselves (Olweus, 1997), and imbalance of power among siblings (Menesini et al., 2010). Nonetheless, these aggressive behaviors suit the usual definitions of bullying (Olweus, 1978, 1997; Smith, 2016; Volk et al., 2014). Wolke et al. (2015) defined sibling bullying as repeated aggressive behavior perpetrated by siblings with the intention to cause harm and involving an element of perceived or real power imbalance. Siblings' relationships contribute to each other's development and adjustment (Wolke & Skew, 2012).

### ***School Bullying Victimization***

The PISA reported on average, across the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, 23% of students reported being bullied at least a few times a month. In contrast, boys were bullied more frequently than girls (OECD, 2019). As defined by Olweus (1997) in the context of school bullying, bullying is an aggressive behavior that intentionally harms another individual within the context of a power imbalance and is carried out repeatedly (Smith, 2016; Volk et al., 2014). Björkqvist et al. (1992) classified bullying into three types: direct physical aggression (e.g., hitting, kicking, pushing), direct verbal aggression (e.g., name-calling, threatening), and indirect aggression (e.g., spreading rumors). The latter types of bullying refer to physical, verbal, and relational or emotional bullying (e.g., being "left out").

## *Subjective Well-Being*

SWB is defined as a person's appraisals and evaluation of their life that reflects a cognitive judgment (life satisfaction) and emotional responses to ongoing life, indicating that life is desirable and proceeding well (Diener et al., 2018). Children's Worlds is an international pioneer survey studying children's SWB.

The theoretical framework used in this study is Cummins' homeostasis theory of SWB (Cummins, 2014), explaining that while individuals experience unpleasant situations—bullying victimization, in the context of our research—SWB is actively controlled and maintained in a similar way to the homeostatic maintenance of body temperature. SWB is “actively controlled and maintained by automatic neurological and psychological processes” (p. 636). SWB homeostasis aims to uphold a normal positive sense of well-being, considered generalized, indiscriminate, and abstract (Cummins, 2014).

According to Cummins (2014), when people are asked about how satisfied they are with life as a whole, the response that people give is not based only on a cognitive evaluation of their life but also reflects the deep, stable, positive mood that is the essence of SWB. This general and abstract sense of positive mood is what homeostasis seeks to defend. The homeostatic system for each individual has a controlled set-point range of SWB from 60 to 90 with a mean of 75 when projected onto a 100-point scale, where 0 represents complete dissatisfaction, and 100 represents complete satisfaction. Cummins (2014) explained within this range that the normal variation around each set-point is approximately six percentage points on either side of its mean. Homeostatic processes thus seek to maintain SWB within this set-point range for each person. This theory also predicts that if an individual experiences something that inhibits their SWB below the set point, the system reverts these SWB levels to within the normal range (Cummins, 2014). This is also referred to as the process of adaptation.

Cummins (2014) further explains two processes that are involved in homeostatic management. One process establishes conditions to minimize the probability of homeostatic failure. The other process uses resources to facilitate recovery after a homeostatic failure. An internal buffer controls both processes and behavior, which can be used to engage or disengage from an emotionally intense situation. Internal buffers consist of behaviors the person generally adopts to avoid intense challenges by establishing routines that make daily experiences predictable and manageable (Cummins, 2014). People generally disengage from unpleasant situations and engage in pleasant conditions. Cummins also explains external buffers that can facilitate homeostasis and maintain stability in the SWB scores, including money, relationships, and purposeful activity.

Money protects SWB through its capacity as a flexible resource to assist homeostasis by allowing people to minimize unwanted challenges in their lives. For example, people can pay others to perform tasks they do not want to do to maintain their level of SWB. Cummins (2014) further explains that having more money and becoming a wealthy person cannot create a perpetually happier person because the level of SWB cannot be sustained higher than within the upper half of the person's set-point range. Money assists homeostasis; however, it is not a proportional guarantee.

Relationships that involve the mutual sharing of intimacy and support are essential in moderating the influence of potential stressors and maintaining the SWB score, facilitating homeostasis by providing a secure environment (Cummins, 2014).

Finally, Cummins (2014) also argues that purposeful activity is an external buffer regarding the person's active engagement and achievement. Cummins (2014) explains two ways in which individuals engage in activities that provide purpose in life: (1) by taking an active social role in groups with family or friends and (2) through outside employment. For example, when individuals disengage from activities (e.g., losing contact with friends or family or unemployment), their SWB is severely threatened.

This study uses Cummins' theory of homeostasis (2014) since bullying is a daily negative experience that children face. Children who experience bullying in their everyday life learn to navigate these challenges (being bullied) and make their daily life manageable.

## **Objective**

Using the third-wave data of the Children's Worlds survey in Indonesia, this study aims to investigate how family and school climate can protect children from the negative consequences of bullying by siblings or other children in school on SWB. This study will be the first to investigate these protective factors of bullying victimization by siblings and other children at school in an under-studied country with a high frequency of bullying incidents using a very large sample from the third wave of the Children's Worlds study.

## **Hypotheses**

### ***Individual Level***

1. At the individual level, we hypothesized that students self-reporting higher levels of peer and sibling bullying victimization will be reporting lower levels of subjective well-being.

2. A positive individual perception of the family and school climate will be associated with a higher subjective well-being adolescent self-report.
3. A negative effect of self-reported sibling bullying on SWB will be weaker for adolescents self-reporting higher levels of individual perception of family climate compared to those adolescents who self-reported lower levels of family climate.
4. A negative effect of self-reported peer bullying on SWB will be weaker for adolescents self-reporting higher levels of individual perception of school climate than adolescents who self-reported lower levels of school climate.

#### *School Level*

1. At the school level we hypothesized the type of school will predict different levels of adolescent subjective well-being.

## **Methods**

### *Sample*

This study used data from the third wave of the Children's Worlds survey that was conducted in Indonesia in 2017. A representative sample of children in West Java Province (27 districts) in Indonesia was obtained in this study. West Java is the most populated province in Indonesia (49,316,712 inhabitants) and is located close to the capital of Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2020). This study used a stratified cluster sampling procedure. Strata were the types of schools in Indonesia: public, private, religious-based, and non-religious-based. The sampling frame included all elementary schools in West Java Province. Ten elementary schools were randomly chosen for each of the 27 districts in West Java. In total, there were 270 schools selected and contacted by the research team. Two chosen schools had been merged into one school, and another one had been closed. Therefore, 267 schools participated in this study, including 209 public and 58 private schools. Clusters were classrooms randomly chosen in each school (one for grade 4 and another one for grade 6), and all students from each selected classroom were taken as participants. On average, each school had 58.9 participants ( $SD=25.3$ ), ranging from 6 to 175 students. In total, 15,604 students participated in the study (49.8% girls, 50.2% boys, Mean age = 10.55,  $SD=1.17$ ).

### *Ethical Approval*

The ethical committee at Universitas Padjadjaran approved the proposal to conduct a research project with children. The research team also received

permission from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religion at the provincial level of West Java to collect data from 267 randomly chosen schools that agreed to participate. Parent's written consent was obtained as a requirement for children to participate in the study. Children were also informed that their data would be treated confidentially and that they were free not to answer any question. The questionnaire was self-administered using pencil and paper. Data were collected anonymously. Data collection was obtained in the classroom, with two researchers observing the process.

### **Instruments**

All instruments used in this study are from Children's Worlds and have been translated into the Indonesian context.

**Bullying items.** There are two items measuring sibling bullying and three items measuring school bullying. Sibling bullying was measured by the frequency of physical bullying experiences ("How often in the last month have you been hit by your brothers or sisters?") and verbal bullying experiences ("How often in the last month have you been called unkind names by your brothers or sisters?"). School bullying was measured by frequency of physical bullying experiences ("How often in the last month have you been hit by other children at school?"), verbal bullying experiences ("How often in the last month have you been called unkind names by other children in school?") and psychological bullying experiences ("How often in the last month have you been left out by other children in your class?"). The items were scored on a four-point frequency scale with four response options (1="never," 2="once," 3="two or three times," and 4="more than three times"). The Cronbach's Alpha for this 5-item scale was .66.

**Children's World Subjective Well-Being Scale.** The Children's Worlds Subjective Well-Being Scale is a multi-item, context-free psychometric scale originally that has been validated and translated into Indonesian (Borualogo & Casas, 2019) using an 11-point scale from 0 (Do not agree at all) to 10 (Totally agree). The items are (1) I enjoy my life, (2) My life is going well, (3) I have a good life, (4) The things that happen in my life are excellent, (5) I like my life, and (6) I am happy with my life. The Cronbach's Alpha for this 6-item scale was .88.

**Family Climate.** Family climate was measured with six items from the Children's Worlds survey (Rees et al., 2020) which are (1) "There are people in my family who care about me," (2) "If I have a problem, people in my family will help me," (3) "We have a good time together in my family," (4) "I feel

safe at home,” (5) “My parents/carers listen to me and take what I say into account,” and (6) “My parents and I make decisions about my life together.” These six items were rated into a 5-point scale which are 1=I do not agree, 2=I agree a little, 3=I agree somewhat, 4=I agree a lot, and 5=I totally agree. The Cronbach’s Alpha of this 6-item scale was .70.

*School Climate.* School climate was measured with four items from the Children’s Worlds survey (Rees et al., 2020), which are (1) “My teachers care about me,” (2) “If I have a problem at school, my teachers will help me,” (3) “My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account,” (4) “I feel safe at school.” These four items were rated into a 5-point scale which are 1=I do not agree, 2=I agree a little, 3=I agree somewhat, 4=I agree a lot, and 5=I totally agree. The Cronbach’s Alpha of this 6-item scale was .69.

## Results

Table 1 includes all descriptives and correlations for the variables in the study. We ran all data analyses using R (R Core Team, 2022) and the *lavaan* library for multilevel structural equation modeling (Rosseel, 2012), using FIML for missing data and robust ML estimation. The covariance coverage matrix for the model showed very low levels of missing data (<0.7%), and we found no statistically significant relations between missing data and demographic characteristics such as gender, age, or the other variables used in our model. We used a multilevel analysis approach to examine the individual and school influences on SWB (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Multilevel analysis is ideal for this type of study because it allows us to partition the within-school and between-school variance for our outcome variable. In this case, we examined individual-level predictors at both levels of analysis and added the type of school in level 2 (public or private).

It is worth noting here that the intra-class correlation (ICC) for the variables in the study, also available in Table 1, is fairly consistent. Overall, ICC values ranged from .03 to .06, indicating that there is a small proportion (3%–6%) of overall variance that can be attributed to the schools. Furthermore, the ICC values for sibling bullying and family climate were comparable to those of school bullying and school climate, indeed slightly higher, indicating that part of the variability in these measures regarding family relations is also related to the schools students belong to.

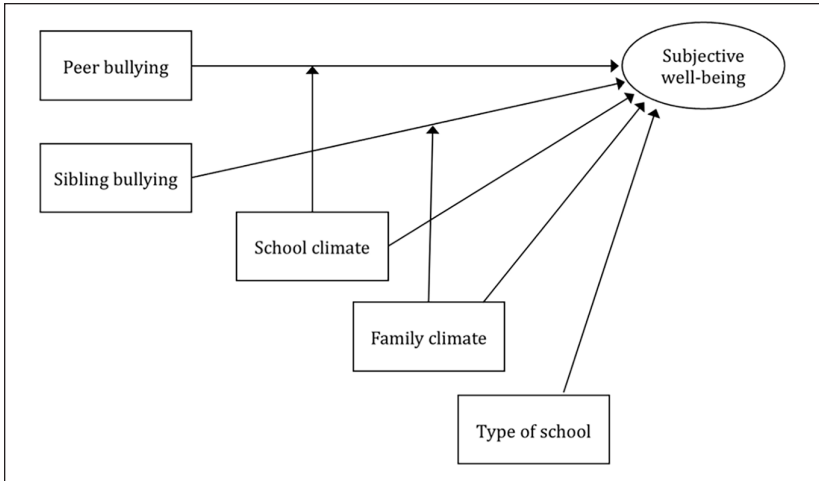
Our hypothesized model is shown in Figure 1 and was drawn based on the theoretical assumption that family climate and school climate may provide some protection from the negative consequences of sibling and school bullying on SWB. We expected that family climate would moderate the effect of

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables.

Variables	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Range	ICC	1	2	3	4	5
1. SWB	15,604	8.67 (1.60)	0–10	.04	—	-.154***	-.142***	.335***	.369***
2. School bullying	15,519	2.00 (.86)	1–4	.03	-.014 <i>ns</i>	—	.351***	-.051***	-.041***
3. Sibling bullying	15,556	1.80 (.90)	1–4	.06	-.14 <i>ns</i>	.599***	—	-.08***	-.088***
4. School climate	15,514	3.83 (.64)	1–5	.04	.592***	-.259***	-.314***	—	.495***
5. Family climate	15,527	4.22 (.64)	1–5	.04	.599***	-.109 <i>ns</i>	.021 <i>ns</i>	.77***	—
6. Public school	15,604	.80 (.40)	0–1	—	.224**	-.169*	-.395***	.138 <i>ns</i>	.101 <i>ns</i>

Note. Individual-level correlations above the diagonal; school-level correlations below. ICC = intra-class correlation; SWB = subjective well-being.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



**Figure 1.** Conceptual model: Peer bullying and sibling bullying predicting subjective well-being, with family and school climate as protective factors.

sibling bullying and that school climate would moderate the impact of school bullying. The type of school provides a further contextual effect on SWB.

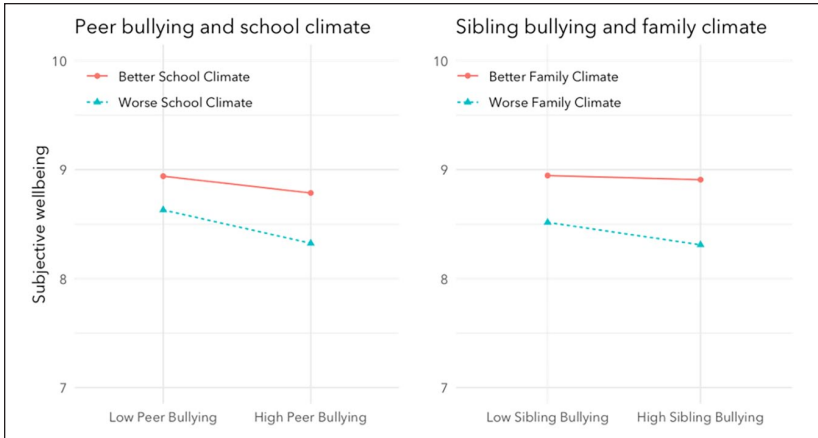
We used a latent variable for SWB and observed variables for our predictors. Multilevel confirmatory factor analysis for SWB provided an excellent fit to the data ( $\chi^2 [18]=353.9, p < .001, CFI=0.98, RMSEA=0.035 [0.033-0.037], SRMR_{within}=0.022, SRMR_{between}=0.024$ ). Two error variances for items 3 and 5, were estimated as negative values in the between-subjects model and thus were constrained to be zero in our main analysis. The primary model included this latent variable for SWB, as well as the following predictors at both levels of analysis: School bullying, sibling bullying, school climate, family climate, and the interactions between school bullying and school climate, school bullying and family climate, sibling bullying and school climate, and sibling bullying and family climate. It is worth noting that all predictors were grand-mean centered before running the models. In addition, the between-level model included the type of school as a binary predictor. This model also showed an excellent fit to the data ( $\chi^2 [105]=1,153, p < .001, CFI=0.98, RMSEA=0.025 [0.024-0.027], SRMR_{within}=0.013, SRMR_{between}=0.055$ ), and its main results are presented in Table 2. Overall, the model explained 19% of the within-level variance in SWB.

At an individual level (within subjects), both school bullying and sibling bullying predicted lower levels of SWB ( $\beta=-.115, p < .001$  and  $\beta=-.061,$

**Table 2.** Multilevel SEM Analysis of SWB.

Predictor Variables	B	SE	$\beta$	p
Within level				
School bullying	-0.19	0.01	-.12	<.001
Sibling bullying	-0.10	0.01	-.06	<.001
School climate	0.42	0.02	.19	<.001
Family climate	0.56	0.02	.26	<.001
School bullying * School climate	0.09	0.02	.04	<.001
School bullying * Family climate	0.03	0.02	.01	.19
Sibling bullying * School climate	0.00	0.02	.00	.96
Sibling bullying * Family climate	0.10	0.02	.04	<.001
Between level				
School bullying	0.35	0.66	.18	.59
Sibling bullying	-0.04	0.44	-.03	.92
School climate	0.88	0.65	.38	.18
Family climate	1.41	0.48	.61	.004
School bullying * School climate	-1.10	4.16	-.20	.79
School bullying * Family climate	2.67	6.45	.42	.68
Sibling bullying * School climate	-2.40	5.71	-.40	.67
Sibling bullying * Family climate	2.15	5.94	.37	.72
Public school (I = Yes)	0.12	0.06	.17	.05

$p < .001$ , respectively). Similarly, school and family climate predicted higher levels of SWB ( $\beta = .193$ ,  $p < .001$  and  $\beta = .257$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively). Most importantly for this study, the interaction between school bullying and school climate was statistically significant ( $\beta = .038$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and so was the interaction between sibling bullying and family climate ( $\beta = .042$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Figure 2 provides the estimated scores from the model following the procedure outlined by Dawson (2014). For the interaction between school bullying and school climate, a simple slopes analysis indicates that the slope of school bullying on SWB is statistically significant both one standard deviation above ( $b = -.118$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and one standard deviation below ( $b = -.250$ ,  $p < .001$ ) the mean of school climate. For the interaction between sibling bullying and family climate, a simple slopes analysis indicates that the slope of sibling bullying on SWB is also statistically significant one standard deviation above ( $b = -.464$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and one standard deviation below ( $b = -.591$ ,  $p < .001$ ) the mean of family climate. In both cases, the interaction effect shows that the negative impact of bullying applies more strongly to students with less favorable classroom or family climates. As expected, the other interactions,



**Figure 2.** Peer bullying, school bullying, school climate, family climate, and subjective well-being.

Note. With the exception of type of school, which is a level-two variable, all other variables were included at both levels in our ML-SEM analysis. ML-SEM = multilevel structural equation modeling.

between sibling bullying and school climate and between school bullying and family climate, were not statistically significant.

Most of the predictors were not statistically significant at the school level (between subjects), with two important exceptions. First, schools with students that reported more favorable levels of family climate also reported higher levels of SWB ( $\beta = .609, p = .004$ ). More surprisingly, students from public schools also reported higher levels of SWB ( $\beta = .170, p = .048$ ). We could not separate the influence of a school being private or public versus a school being religious or not. Most private schools are religious in this sample, and most public schools are not. In our dataset, only one school was both public and religious, and no school was private and non-religious. We also ran the model using religious/non-religious instead of public/private with similar results, even though school type did not reach statistical significance in this case. The model explained 60% of the between-level variance in SWB.

## Discussion

As expected, school and sibling bullying behaviors were associated with lower levels of SWB, consistent with previous studies (e.g., Borualogo & Casas, 2021b, 2021c; Varela, Sánchez, De Tezanos-Pinto, et al., 2021; Varela, Sánchez, González, et al., 2021). The adverse effects of the experience of

bullying, school, and sibling are consistent across different cultures, highlighting the importance of prevention and a better understanding of protective factors for these behaviors. Previous meta-analyses have found consistent results to recognize a causal relationship between bullying victimization and mental health problems (e.g., Moore et al., 2017; van Geel et al., 2022). One of the most serious concerns about bullying is the risk of adolescent suicidal ideation as a result of the experience of victimization. Recent studies show that peer victimization experiences do predict future suicide ideation (van Geel et al., 2022). Our analysis also includes sibling bullying as a significant contribution to the literature to examine the negative effect on adolescent mental health (Dantchev & Wolke, 2019a, 2019b; Dantchev et al., 2018). As we hypothesized, sibling bullying hurts adolescent well-being during childhood and adolescence but is not always considered to examine its adverse effects. Sibling bullying could increase the risk of being involved in school bullying with an increasing cumulative negative impact on their victims (Wolke et al., 2015). This is a problem considering the school and family are supposed to be two contextual safe spaces for children and adolescents. Conversely, when school and peer bullying victimization is present, the adverse effects are higher, increasing the chances of diverse mental health problems in the present (Foody et al., 2020) but also in the long term. For example, Dantchev et al. (2019), using a sample of 3,881 youth from the U.K. surveys at 12 years old and then later at 24 years old, found that sibling bullying victims had higher levels of suicidal ideation and self-harm in early adulthood, even after controlling from school bullying.

The role of school and family climate is essential for providing children and adolescents with a safe and significant space to support their well-being (e.g., Casas, 2016; Lee & Yoo, 2014; Varela, Sánchez, De Tezanos-Pinto, et al., 2021; Varela, Sánchez, González, et al., 2021). Following these hypotheses, our study found similar results from previous studies, in which family and school are essential for adolescent well-being in Indonesia. Even though the influence of peers is significant for adolescents, the role of family support is also vital for their well-being. For example, Guevara et al. (2021) examined the responses from 1,375 adolescents finding a direct connection between well-being and the perception of a more favorable family climate. In addition, previous studies also highlight the importance of school for adolescent well-being. For example, Chu et al., (2010) found support for teachers and school personnel was one of the most significant variables for adolescent well-being based on 246 studies in a meta-analysis.

When considering the negative effect of school and sibling bullying on their levels of well-being, we found two interaction effects. School climate is a protective factor against the negative consequences of school bullying on

well-being, consistent with previous studies in other cultural contexts (e.g., Chile: Varela et al., 2019; South Africa: Varela et al., 2020). Following our theoretical review, our results highlight the importance of school climate for adolescents, which is consistent with other studies. For instance, Kutsyuruba et al. (2015) highlighted the importance of school climate on student well-being based on a meta-review built on 20 systematic reviews, 157 primary studies, and 13 non-scholarly (not peer-reviewed) resources published between 1963 and 2013. In this study, we also found the protective role of family climate for the adverse effects of sibling bullying on SWB. Here, family and their positive relationships are essential for children, especially if they face peer bullying when interacting during childhood and adolescence. As stated by Cummins (2014) the importance of having good relationships with family and friends a buffer for their SWB. Even though previous studies recognize the link between parenting behaviors and bullying, both as victim and perpetrator (e.g., Lereya et al., 2013), less is known about the role of sibling bullying. Our results highlight the importance of the family as a protective factor in this case, similar to the part of peers in other studies. For example, Coyle et al. (2017) found a direct effect of sibling bullying on internalizing problems after controlling the effects of bullying. Still, at the same time, the role of peers was a protective factor between sibling bullying and depression. In this case, our study expands the literature by adding the part of family climate as a protective factor.

Another significant contribution of our study is using a more extensive national data set to explore the effect of individual and school levels on adolescent well-being. In our research, at the school level, we found to be part of a public school is associated with higher levels of SWB, which was unexpected. Despite previous studies, our study significantly contributes to studying adolescent well-being by considering student and school-level data, which can contribute to a better understanding of adolescent well-being. For example, by using multilevel analysis, we can find between-school variations to understand the levels of adolescent well-being, like Newland et al. (2019). Their study compared the levels of well-being at the individual and country levels, comparing 14 countries considering the gross domestic product and income inequality for each. Even though the country-level data did not strongly predict well-being, there was still an improvement for the whole model.

The result that public schools predict higher SWB was surprising, and not what would have been expected based on previous research and our knowledge of the Indonesian context. We don't consider such a result definitive (it is also close to the threshold of statistical significance), but there are some important reflections to be made regarding this issue. Being in a more crowded classroom in public schools seems to increase students' SWB.

Although the incidence of bullying in public schools is higher than in private schools (Borualogo et al., 2024), having more students in the classroom also provides opportunities for social interaction which is one of the sources of children's well-being. Public schools in Indonesia also generally have shorter learning hours than private schools. This may also be the reason for their higher levels of SWB, as they have more time to play after school.

## **Study Limitations**

Despite previous results, we can recognize important limitations in our study. First, even though we use a larger data set, we only use data at one-time point. Therefore, the associations between our variables must be cautious. Secondly, our data set covers larger parts of the country but mostly focuses on urban areas. Considering our results in this context, and how they might be different in a rural school context, is important. Third, although we studied bullying from peers and siblings, we did not consider other forms of aggression, such as cyberbullying. Future studies can include cyberbullying to test the protective role of families and school climate on their subjective well-being.

We examined bullying as a general aggressive behavior, but other studies can replicate our analysis by reviewing different forms of aggression, such as relational versus physical bullying. This is important because programs that intend to increase the well-being of adolescents are based on multicomponent school strategies based on positive psychology (Tejada-Gallardo et al., 2020), which can consider different forms of aggressive behavior. Therefore, future studies are needed to explore if there are other results for each type of aggression to inform prevention programs for adolescents.

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**Jorge J. Varela**, PhD, is an associate professor and director of the "Co-existence" Lab at the Socioemotional Well-Being Institute, Faculty of Psychology, Universidad del Desarrollo. His research focused on understanding different types of aggressive behavior among adolescents in the school context, such as aggression in general, bullying, cyberbullying, and school violence. In the same way, the underlying mechanism of different protective factors like well-being and school climate in school contexts. He has also worked in social and educational foundations (NGOs) on prevention, safety, and school climate in Santiago and other country regions. He has consulted the IDB and government agencies, such as the Minister of Education and the Ministry of Home Office, on security, prevention, and violence in the school context.

**Pablo De Tezanos-Pinto** research focuses on the consequences of contextual levels of social integration, such as those in a particular neighborhood or classroom, and how people may establish and maintain meaningful relationships across social groups. More recently, he has also studied the way people behave in public or shared spaces, topics related to social exclusion and marginalization such as bullying, and also the study of political participation, with a special interest in how and when marginalized groups may engage in political movements and protests because of their discontent with the political system.