

BULLYING VICTIMIZATION, COVITALITY, AND SCHOOL CLIMATE: THE
MODERATING EFFECT OF ACCUMULATIVE POSITIVE TRAITS

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ABSTRACT

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Bullying is an unfortunate, negative behavior occurring in schools today that comes with a host of negative outcomes. There are a variety of facets that influence bullying; two important ones include the school climate and the individual traits of the student. The way in which students perceive their school is highly impactful of whether they will have positive or negative experiences. Bullying victimization is a part of those experiences in school that shape a student's view. Additionally, internal attributes also help influence how a student will respond and interpret their experiences. The concept of covitality suggests that students who have a greater number of positive traits are more likely to experience positive outcomes and have greater resilience to negative outcomes. An accumulation of positive traits may equip students who are the victim of bullying with the resources to overcome the negative experience that might negatively shape their view of their school. The purpose of this study is to address the research question of whether covitality moderates the relationship between bullying victimization and school climate. The results of the study found that students generally reported less bullying victimization, higher covitality, and higher school climate. There was a relationship between bullying victimization and school climate. When covitality was added, bullying victimization and

covitality, together, predicted school climate. However, covitality was not shown to moderate the relationship between bullying victimization and school climate. These effects did not differ by gender. Limitations, future research, and implications for practice are discussed.

Keywords: bullying, bullying victimization, covitality, positive traits, school climate

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Negative and positive experiences are something that is pervasive in the lives of children. They encounter a variety of experiences, opportunities, and difficulties that shape the way they perceive themselves and their lives. Their internal attributes and resources as well as their experiences in school are some ways in which students are influenced by the world around them. Covitality is one of the ways in which the accumulation of positive resources and attributes can be applied to children; covitality in children can create opportunities for positive outcomes, while mitigating the negative ones (Furlong, Dowdy, et al., 2014). Experiences in school encompasses the overall school climate, which may be positive or negative, as well as specific experiences such as bullying victimization.

Bullying

Bullying is one particularly large influence seen in schools today that affects children. Approximately 20% of students report being bullied at school (Wang et al., 2020). Data suggests that among those who are bullied, approximately 79% of students do not report it, which shows how pervasive the impact of bullying is in schools today as well as difficulty determining accurate estimates of reporting (Pečjak & Pirc, 2017).

Bullying can be explained in many ways, but is most commonly defined as unwanted, negative, and aggressive actions, which often repeats over time, and involves a real or perceived power imbalance occurring among school-aged children (Olweus,

1993). There are many factors related to bullying, such as bullying roles as well as types of bullying. Bullying may be categorized as direct or indirect, as well as through types such as emotional or relational bullying, physical bullying, and cyberbullying. Bullying roles may consist of the bully, victim, and the bystander; the social nature of bullying is influenced by the climate of the environment in which it takes place as well as the internal attributes, such as a person's emotions, attitudes, motivations, and individual characteristics (Salmivalli, 2010).

Bullying victimization over time can cause a myriad of negative outcomes on academic achievement (Buhs et al., 2006; Hysing et al., 2019; Klein et al., 2012; Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010; van der Werf, 2014), physical health (Copeland et al., 2014; Evans et al., 2019; Forero et al., 1999; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; Hysing et al., 2019; Rivers et al., 2009; Wolke et al., 2001; Wolke et al., 2013), and mental health, putting these students more at risk for social-emotional problems (Eliot et al., 2010; Ferrás & Selman, 2014; Hysing et al., 2019; Klein et al., 2012; Konishi et al., 2017; Rivers et al., 2009; Sainio et al., 2010; Thapa et al., 2013). Academic issues may consist of lower achievement and higher dropout rates among many other negative outcomes (Klein et al., 2012; van der Werf, 2014). Physical effects may include an increase in the stress response, difficulties with sleep, and other adverse health issues (Evans et al., 2019; Hysing et al., 2019). Social-emotional problems include anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and increased risk of suicide (Eliot et al., 2010; Ferrás & Selman, 2014; Klein et al., 2012; Konishi et al., 2017).

There is no doubt that bullying is a widespread phenomenon in schools that creates problems in a variety of domains. Adverse outcomes may be mitigated through addressing school climate and focusing on interventions that foster positive attributes (Fullchange & Furlong, 2016; Johnson et al., 2013; Pečjak & Pirc, 2017).

Covitality

Children who are bullied have resources and attributes from which they pull from that, in turn, influence their reactions and outcomes, whether positive or negative, to the situation. The synergistic combination of positive traits may equip students who are the victim of bullying situations with the resources to have more positive outcomes.

Covitality is one avenue through which the outcomes of bullying may be addressed.

Covitality is described as the cooperative effect of positive mental health that is the result of co-occurring positive traits that increase the likelihood of positive outcomes (Furlong et al., 2013; Furlong, Dowdy, et al., 2014). It has foundations in positive psychology and social-emotional learning theory (Renshaw et al., 2014). Essentially, the theory of covitality posits that the sum of positive attributes is greater than the single positive factors alone.

Covitality is comprised of four domain strengths (i.e., engaged living, emotional competence, belief-in-self, and belief-in-others), each with three sub-domains, each representing the lower-order positive-psychological building blocks that are strengthened when combined into the higher-order construct of covitality (Renshaw et al., 2014).

Engaged living includes optimism, zest, and gratitude. *Emotional competence* includes emotional regulation, self-control, and empathy. *Belief-in-self* includes concepts such as

self-awareness, self-efficacy, and persistence. Finally, *belief-in-others* includes family support, peer support, and school support (Renshaw et al., 2014).

Covitality has been associated with a variety of positive outcomes including greater prosocial behavior, greater academic outcomes, lower probability of social-emotional difficulties, and greater resilience (Furlong et al., 2013; Keyfitz et al., 2013; Renshaw et al., 2014; Wilkins et al., 2015). These positive outcomes that covitality fosters may mitigate the negative influence bullying has on a student's perceptions of their school environment.

School Climate

School climate is an important aspect of the way children perceive and feel about their school experience. It is commonly defined as “the quality and character of school life” and represents how students think and feel about their school (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 182). It encompasses student, teacher, and staff perceptions of safety, order and norms, connectedness, and the interpersonal relationships between individuals within the school and how these elements influence school life.

Safety within a school includes the perceptions of violence as well as feeling safe socially, emotionally, intellectually, and physically. Order and norms relate to how rules are consistently and fairly enforced. Connectedness is the result when students believe that staff and peers care about them as individuals and care about their learning and ability to succeed. Interpersonal relationships include the peer relationships and adult relationships that are formed and influence a child's school environment (Ferrás & Selman, 2014; Thapa et al., 2013).

A positive school climate has been linked in the literature to a variety of outcomes such as greater academic achievement, greater help seeking, more prosocial attitudes, less social and emotional distress, less aggressive and delinquent behaviors, and less instances of bullying (Acosta et al., 2019; Bosworth & Judkins, 2014; Caprara et al., 2015; Eliot et al., 2010; Ferrás & Selman, 2014; Fullchange & Furlong, 2016; Thapa et al., 2013). Having a positive school climate is important in helping students succeed academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally. It provides a safe learning environment that without it impedes the growth and development schools aim to help students achieve.

Purpose of the Study

Bullying victimization and school climate are directly linked in the literature (Acosta et al., 2019; Thapa et al., 2013). Students in a negative school environment report greater instances of bullying; thus, students who are victimized also perceive their school to be a more negative, hostile environment (Acosta et al., 2019, Nansel et al., 2001). The covitality literature suggests that students can capitalize on their cumulative positive strengths, which leads to more positive outcomes including the ability to cope with negative situations they encounter, such as bullying (Fullchange & Furlong, 2016; Terranova, 2009).

Thus, covitality may be key in helping influence the magnitude of the relationship between bullying victimization and school climate. Having a high accumulation of positive traits (i.e., covitality) leads students to have a greater number of resources, such as their emotional competence, social resources, and other resilient traits, to pull from which could result in believing school is not so bad. Covitality may be a buffer for the

negative outcomes that come with bullying victimization and, thus, experiencing a negative school climate as a result.

The purpose of this study is to address the research question of whether covitality moderates the relationship between bullying victimization and school climate. Although there are a variety of studies looking at covitality, there are no studies, to the author's current knowledge, that address how covitality may moderate specific relationships between bullying victimization and school climate.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

With approximately 55 million students spending on average over six and a half hours in schools per day in the United States, schools should be a place where students feel safe, respected, and supported (Cornell & Bradshaw, 2015; Glander, 2017; Wang et al., 2020). Students encounter a variety of experiences throughout their time in school, some of which are positive, while others are negative. These experiences can be due to external circumstances and can be influenced by a student's internal resources. Of these experiences, students are likely to encounter bullying during school, whether as a victim, bully, or witness. Bullying victimization brings a host of negative outcomes such as academic issues and social-emotional problems.

The climate of their school, which encompasses the safety measures in place, the connection students feel to their school, and the relationships they have with their peers and teachers, is a factor that can define whether students feel positively or negatively towards their school experience as well as influence how bullying is both perceived and handled within the institution (Gendron et al., 2011). Additionally, students' individual traits, especially the accumulation of positive traits (i.e., covitality) they have, such as optimism, gratitude, zest, and persistence, can serve as a protective factor towards the experiences of negative outcomes, including bullying (Furlong et al., 2013; Terranova, 2009). Bullying, covitality, and school climate are interrelated as these all contribute to

the environment students experience during their time at school, and discussing these together provide an interesting and important route of literature to consider and explore.

Bullying

In 2017, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data indicated that 20.2% of students aged 12 through 18 years reported being bullied at school (Wang et al., 2020). Pečjak and Pirc (2017) found that more than half of students (56.5%) were not victims of any type of bullying, yet among those who were bullied, approximately 79% of them did not share their experiences with anyone, resulting in only 21% of students reporting the bullying, which is consistent with the NCES data. Students often shared their experience with friends (58%), followed by parents (24%), and then teachers (18%; Pečjak & Pirc, 2017).

Bullying Definitions and Types

Bullying is most commonly defined as unwanted, negative, and aggressive actions, which often repeats over time, and involves a real or perceived power imbalance and occurs among school-aged children (Olweus, 1993). Bullying is a subtype of aggressive behavior and is an intentional action that uses one's strength or popularity to purposely injure, threaten, or embarrass another person (Pečjak & Pirc, 2017). Although the majority of bullying definitions in the literature follow the previous definition laid out by Olweus, which include the three core elements that (1) there is the intention to harm, (2) it is repetitive in nature, and (3) there is a clear power imbalance, there is some variation (Gaffney et al., 2019; Olweus, 1993).

One such variation comes from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2020), which defines bullying similarly with the addition that it does not involve siblings or current dating partners. The CDC also includes property damage, and that bullying can inflict physical, psychological, social, or educational harm or distress. The American Psychological Association (APA, 2004) also defines bullying similarly to the above with the addition that the “bullied individual typically has trouble defending him or herself and does nothing to ‘cause’ the bullying” (p. 1). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) adds to the definition Olweus (1993) proposes by stating that it often takes place in schools and online as well as other environments where children gather. Although similar in nature, the nuances in the definitions of bullying provides a more in-depth picture of how bullying can play a role in a vast number of places, scenarios, people involved, and outcomes that can be considered. What others may perceive to be bullying versus not bullying, may be a function of the definition by which they are familiar (e.g., property damage or siblings). Additionally, the various definitions also show that bullying is a widespread issue and involves a large number of different behaviors, outcomes, and people.

Another factor at play in considering the widespread nature of bullying are the different types of bullying. Physical bullying, emotional or relational bullying, and cyberbullying are a number of forms through which bullying can occur and may represent actions such as hitting, threatening, teasing, ignoring, spreading rumors, or sending hurtful messages (Johnson et al., 2013). The NCES conducted a study with the National Crime Victimization Survey in 2017 with approximately 9,700 students aged 12

to 18 years (Wang et al., 2020). Being the subject of rumors (13.4%) and being made fun of, called names, or insulted (13%) were the most common types of bullying reported, with females reporting slightly higher levels of bullying than males (Wang et al., 2020). Other studies have supported this gender difference (Seals & Young, 2003; Wang et al., 2009). However, Lapidot-Lefler and Colev-Cohen (2015) found that males were victimized more often than females. Yet, other studies have found no significant gender differences among those who reported being victims of bullying (Charach et al., 1995; Pepler & Craig, 1997). Additionally, worldwide studies have found that verbal bullying is the most common, followed by social bullying, while physical bullying is the least frequent form (Marsh et al., 2011; Pečjak & Pirc, 2017; Wang et al., 2009).

Bullying has also been categorized as direct or indirect. Direct bullying is considered to be overt aggression involving direct, observable confrontations that may include physical or verbal attacks (Marini et al., 2006). Conversely, indirect bullying is more covert involving social manipulation that is less likely to be detected or less likely to face retribution and may include exclusion or ostracization of peers as well as spreading rumors (Marini et al., 2006). Although gender is not necessarily a predictor for aggression, research shows trends that “males are commonly victims and perpetrators of direct forms of aggression, whereas females tend to experience indirect or relational bullying” (Lenzi et al., 2015, p. 416).

Bullying Roles

Bullying is a group process involving social relationships where multiple people each play a unique role (Cornell & Bradshaw, 2015; Salmivalli et al., 1996). Salmivalli et

al. (1996) first described this phenomenon as participant roles. Bullying is a phenomenon that involves more than just the bully and the victim. Other children are present in the environment who play a role in bullying. She noted that other students, aside from the bully and victim, most commonly involved in bullying include the outsider (i.e., the silent approver), the reinforcer of the bully, the assistant to the bully, and the defender of the victim (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Salmivalli, 2014). Bystanders are especially important because they are easier to influence than the bully (Salmivalli, 2014).

Students tend to be moderately aware of their own roles in bullying situations; they are able to self-estimate their own behavior and how they might react in a bullying situation (Salmivalli et al., 1996). However, self-estimations, overall, tended to underestimate aggressive behavior and overestimate a prosocial and/or passive role, which is more socially desirable and can be described as a “self-serving attribution bias” (Salmivalli et al., 1996, p. 11). Bystanders often think bullying is bad and want to do something to help the situation and victim (Salmivalli, 2014). Students also make assumptions about the situation and about the people involved in bullying (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Gifford-Smith & Rabiner, 2004; Terranova, 2009). This can include assumptions towards the bully, such as the bully is jealous or the bully needs lunch money, or it can include assumptions toward the victim, such as the victim is deviant or the victim provoked the bully, which impacts how they react to the situation (e.g., stand up to the bully or reinforce the bully; Bosacki et al., 2006; Frisén et al., 2007; Guy et al., 2017; Thornberg & Knutsen, 2010).

Group members' different roles are impacted and guided by different emotions, attitudes, motivations, and individual characteristics, such as covitality, that interact with environmental factors, such as school climate (Salmivalli, 2010). Traditionally, the two main roles are the victim, or the person who is the recipient of bullying, and the bully, or the individual or group of individuals who is the source of the aggressive or negative action. Victim-bullies have also been discussed as an important role as these are individuals who are both a recipient of bullying, yet are also perpetrators to other peers. Other individuals present also play a role; even those who are not directly involved often are aware of the situation due to the fact that, by definition, bullying happens repeatedly over time (Salmivalli et al., 1996).

The bully is the source of perpetration and victims may respond in a variety of ways, such as being passive, submissive, or aggressive. Research suggests that younger students are more likely to use an aggressive response, although this may be reflective of developmental trends of more physical bullying in younger students and greater relational bullying in older students (Johnson et al., 2013). Minority students may be more likely to use an aggressive response that is combined with help seeking to address the situation with an adult (Johnson et al., 2013). Victims with repeated bullying towards them also responded more often with an aggressive response, which may be due to the opportunity to try out different types of ways to confront the bully (Johnson et al., 2013).

Research suggests that bullies are often motivated by the pursuit of high status as well as a dominant position in a peer group (Salmivalli, 2010). Although this seems like an individual pursuit, social status is inherently a group process through which others

give feedback to others that determines their status (Salmivalli, 2010). Victims, time of aggression, and environment may be chosen by the bully so that the bully has a greater chance of success in obtaining their higher position and dominance, such as with a victim who is more submissive and insecure as well as who has less friends, and witnesses to see the aggression so that the bully is less likely to be confronted due to their negative behaviors (Salmivalli, 2010).

Furthermore, the bystander role in the interplay between the traditional representation of the victim and bully in a bullying scenario creates a new lens through which to add to the conversation as witnesses are present in approximately 85-88% of all bullying episodes (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Hawkins et al., 2001). The bystander may be passive, where the individual may be inadvertently supporting the bullying behavior, or an upstander or defender, where the individual stands up towards the bullying (Thapa et al., 2013). When witnesses or an audience are present, the likelihood of bullying increases; however, when students express disapproval of the bully's actions, the likelihood of bullying decreases (Ferrás & Selman, 2014). When students act as defenders, it is often an effective way to put an end to a bullying episode (Hawkins et al., 2001).

Yet, most students do not take a stand against bullying and choose to remain uninvolved to protect their peer status, which may mean aligning with the popular but aggressive students rather than the victims, who are often viewed as social outcasts; students are often attempting to avoid being victimized themselves (Ferrás & Selman, 2014; Juvonen & Galvan, 2008). Therefore, ignoring the bullying may be interpreted as

implicit approval of the bully's behavior (Salmivalli et al., 1996). Bystanders who reinforce the bully are positively and strongly associated with the frequency of bullying, while defenders are negatively associated with the frequency of bullying (Salmivalli, 2010). School climate, however, plays a role in whether students will be defenders, with a positive school climate fostering greater defending, and negative school climate furthering more passive behavior and acceptance of bullying (Bosworth & Judkins, 2014; Ferrás & Selman, 2014; Wang et al., 2013).

Bullying Outcomes

There is vast and growing literature on the impact and adverse outcomes of bullying on academic achievement (Buhs et al., 2006; Hysing et al., 2019; Klein et al., 2012; Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010; van der Werf, 2014), physical health (Copeland et al., 2014; Evans et al., 2019; Forero et al., 1999; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; Hysing et al., 2019; Rivers et al., 2009; Wolke et al., 2001; Wolke et al., 2013), and mental health of those victimized (Eliot et al., 2010; Ferrás & Selman, 2014; Hysing et al., 2019; Klein et al., 2012; Konishi et al., 2017; Rivers et al., 2009; Sainio et al., 2010; Thapa et al., 2013). Academically, bullying can contribute to greater levels of school refusal, truancy, and dropout alongside negative effects on learning in school (Klein et al., 2012). Bullying has been associated with negative academic performance, both in the short-term and long-term (van der Werf, 2014). Students involved in bullying (i.e., bully, victim, victim-bully) have lower grade point averages (GPA) when compared to individuals not directly involved in bullying (Hysing et al., 2019). Hysing et al. (2019) suggest that this may be due to resulting social-emotional difficulties from the bullying, such as lowered self-

esteem and mental health difficulties, as well as sleep difficulties that arose, thus impacting a student's ability to achieve as expected in school. Students who have been bullied and those with persistent victimization are more likely to earn lower grades and score lower on standardized achievement tests as well as report decreased academic engagement (Fullchange & Furlong, 2016; Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010; van der Werf, 2014). They also participate less in class, as they might fear the reactions of others towards their comments or questions in class; have difficulty concentrating on academic tasks, possibly due to a preoccupation of being bullied; and have a decreased motivation to study, as they may have less interest in learning due to a school environment comprised of mocking, stress, and anger (Buhs et al., 2006; van der Werf, 2014).

Evans et al. (2019) found supporting evidence that the cumulative frequency and severity of bullying victimization may be a form of toxic stress with deleterious effects on behavioral and mental health. Students involved in bullying report significantly shorter sleep duration and higher prevalence of insomnia (Hysing et al., 2019). Bullying has been associated with a number of adverse physical health issues and psychosomatic problems such as sleep difficulty, abdominal pain, nausea/upset stomach, appetite suppression, headaches, higher frequency of illness (e.g., coughs and colds, sore throats), and increases in low-grade systemic inflammation from childhood to young adulthood, with the greatest negative outcomes for those who are victims and victim-bullies (Bowser et al., 2018; Copeland et al., 2014; Forero et al., 1999; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; Rivers et al., 2009; Wolke et al., 2001; Wolke et al., 2013).

Studies have shown that victims of bullying are more at-risk for serious social-emotional problems including anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, loneliness, and increased risk of suicide, which can often last into adulthood (Eliot et al., 2010; Ferrás & Selman, 2014; Klein et al., 2012; Konishi et al., 2017). Victims often have greater difficulty making friends and have poorer relationships with classmates (Fullchange & Furlong, 2016). However, victims who have had someone stand up to the bullying tend to have higher self-esteem, greater peer acceptance, and were less frequently victimized (Sainio et al., 2010). Research suggests that bullies are at-risk for greater disruptive behavior, conduct problems, substance abuse, delinquency, depression, and suicidal ideation (Hysing et al., 2019; Konishi et al., 2017; Rivers et al., 2009). Bullies often make threats, and victims often threaten retaliation as a source of self-defense, both of which can be indicators of subsequent violence and weapon use (Eliot et al., 2010). Witnesses are also not immune to these negative effects. Witnesses may experience greater feelings of depression, anxiety, and hostility as well as lowered commitment and engagement in school (Thapa et al., 2013).

Although bullying can result in a host of negative outcomes, several factors have been related to a decrease in bullying victimization. The average bullying program has been found to decrease victimization by approximately 15 to 20% and decrease bullying perpetration by approximately 19 to 20% (Gaffney et al., 2019; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). Additionally, although school bullying interventions result in modest positive outcomes, “they are more likely to influence knowledge, attitudes, and self-perceptions rather than actual bullying behaviors; and that the majority of outcome variables in

intervention studies are not meaningfully impacted” (Merrell et al., 2008, p. 26).

However, these interventions have shown to have a positive impact on student’s social competence, self-esteem, peer acceptance, and defending skills as well as teacher’s knowledge, efficacy, and response to bullying incidents (Kaufman et al., 2018; Merrell et al., 2008). The positive effects of these intervention programs, however, were limited to students below eighth grade as there was no significant effect for students above seventh grade (Yeager et al., 2015).

There is no doubt that bullying can cause problems. Bullying is a widespread and concerning phenomenon plaguing schools and youth today. There are a variety of adverse outcomes that students experience as a result of being involved in bullying, whether as a bully, victim, or witness (Eliot et al., 2010; Hysing et al., 2019). Bullying programs often use strategies such as addressing school norms around bullying behavior, improving bystander behavior, improving school climate, and focusing on fostering other positive attributes (Fullchange & Furlong, 2016; Johnson et al., 2013; Pečjak & Pirc, 2017). Due to these findings, there is a need to foster avenues through which students of all ages can benefit from interventions or alternatives that lessen the prevalence of bullying in the first place. Student’s innate attributes and traits may be of interest in determining how they will react to and cope with bullying. Additionally, the climate of the school may also be important in determining how bullying is handled, as well as lessen the prevalence of it, when the climate is positive as these are a common characteristic of successful anti-bullying programs. Students will need to draw upon their resources to overcome and cope with the presence of bullying in their school.

Covitality

Students encounter both negative and positive aspects within their life as well as within themselves. There was the thought that negative and positive mental health was two sides to a single continuum. However, the dual-factor model suggests that there are two distinct dimensions that include assessment of positive indicators of wellness and negative indicators of illness (Suldo & Shaffer, 2008). This theory suggests that the absence of illness does not necessarily equate to mental health and positive factors, but rather, positive and negative factors coexist. Allowing for a focus to exist on not only existing symptoms but also on strengths and positive factors would allow for a more complete view of an individual's mental health so that treatment can also target prevention of symptoms and protect against the emergence of problematic behaviors (Kim et al., 2014). This idea is not only targeted on focusing on a single issue or positive trait, but can also include looking at more than one issue and more than one positive trait.

Covitality Definition

Covitality has been conceptualized as the counterpart to comorbidity (Renshaw et al., 2014). Comorbidity describes when more than one illness, disease, or disorder occurs simultaneously in an individual. Conversely, covitality is the result of co-occurring positive mental health traits that increase the likelihood of positive outcomes; thus, the simultaneous presence of more than one positive trait (Furlong, Dowdy, et al., 2014). It is defined as “the synergistic effect of positive mental health resulting from the interplay among multiple positive-psychological building blocks” (Furlong et al., 2013, p. 1013). Thus, the sum is greater than its parts (Furlong, Dowdy, et al., 2014). The concept of

covitality is unique in that it provides a positive mindset in how to approach the skills, assets, and traits inherent in students. Positive traits combine to create more positive outcomes, similar to the way that greater negative traits combine and may result in more negative outcomes. Even further, covitality may be the key to a better understanding of an individual when one can take into account both the positive and negative factors contributing to the outcomes, both good and bad, that they have faced.

Within the theory of covitality, children are better able to reach positive developmental outcomes, such as greater well-being, greater prosocial behavior, and lower psychological problems, when they have positive internal dispositions and skill sets that they can draw upon to influence their interactions and quality of life (Furlong, Dowdy, et al., 2014; Renshaw et al., 2014). The presence of multiple traits is theorized to be better predictors of good outcomes than the isolated traits would provide alone (Furlong et al., 2013). The idea of capitalizing on positive traits is not new in the research, and there are many foundational theories that lend themselves to explaining covitality and its theory.

Foundational Theories to Covitality

Although the theory of covitality is an up and coming area of research, the concept is not entirely new, and has been presented in the literature in different ways (e.g., Furlong, You, et al., 2014; Miller et al., 2014; Scales et al., 2006; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). The study of cumulative-assets framework through the Search Institute's 40 developmental assets model suggests that more positive developmental outcomes, such as academic achievement and subjective well-being, are associated with greater numbers of

internal assets, such as self-efficacy and social competences, and external assets, such as supportive parents and social cohesion in the neighborhood, and negatively associated with risk behaviors such as substance use, violence perpetration, and victimization (Benson & Scales, 2012; Furlong, You, et al., 2014; Scales et al., 2006).

Social-emotional learning (SEL) theory and positive psychology are foundational theories through which covitality rests (Renshaw et al., 2014). Schonert-Reichl (2017) describe SEL as:

The process by which people acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to understand and manage their emotions, to feel and show empathy for others, to establish and achieve positive goals, to develop and maintain positive relationships, and to make responsible decisions. (p.139)

It involves competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making, all of which are clearly influences in the theory of covitality as the covitality theory seeks to capitalize on the combination of strengths, similar to those in social-emotional learning, to create greater positive outcomes (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Positive psychology is the study of positive features and facets of psychology; sometimes referred to as the science of happiness (Chafouleas & Bray, 2004). It “emphasizes that wellness is more than the absence of disease symptoms” (Miller et al., 2014, p. 478). Positive psychology advocates for a change in mindset from a fixation on deficits and problems, shifting to promoting mental health and well-being (Miller et al.,

2014). It also encompasses subjective well-being as well as protective factors and resilience that mitigates negative outcomes in individuals (Shoshani & Steinmetz, 2014).

Covitality Domain Strengths

Covitality is comprised of four domain strengths (i.e., engaged living, emotional competence, belief-in-self, and belief-in-others), each with three sub-domains, each representing the lower-order positive-psychological building blocks that are strengthened when combined into the higher-order construct of covitality (Renshaw et al., 2014).

Engaged living, drawing from the positive psychology literature, includes optimism, zest, and gratitude (Renshaw et al., 2014). Optimism is characterized as having an overall expectation that good outcomes, rather than bad outcomes, will happen (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Optimism is associated with better physical health and subjective well-being as well as decreased risk of developing anxiety and depression, likely due to its association with more adaptive coping strategies (Boman et al., 2009; Carver & Scheier, 2005; Wilkins et al., 2015). It has also been linked to more positive social engagement and larger social networks (Brissette et al., 2002). In the educational setting, optimism may be related to greater academic achievement, academic interest, adjustment, delayed gratification, locus of control, self-concept, and positive interpersonal relationships (Boman et al., 2009). Zest is the orientation of approaching life with excitement and energy (Park & Peterson, 2006). Zest has been shown to be strongly correlated with life satisfaction and is stronger in children than adults (Park et al., 2004; Park & Peterson, 2006). It has also shown a positive relationship with physical health, emotional well-being, autonomy, and interpersonal relationships (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Gratitude

is the ability to sense and feel thankful in response to the benevolence of another (Emmons, 2007; Jones et al., 2013). Gratitude is positively related to perceptions of social support, providing emotional support to others, positive affect, social integration, life satisfaction, and academic achievement (Froh et al., 2011; Furlong et al., 2013).

The second of the four domains of covitality, *emotional competence*, draws from the SEL literature, and includes emotional regulation, self-control, and empathy (Renshaw et al., 2014). Emotional regulation is the ability to effectively manage one's positive and negative emotions, while self-control is the ability to effectively express and manage one's behavior in different contexts (Fry et al., 2012; Hofer et al., 2011). Greater emotional regulation is associated with lower internalizing and externalizing psychopathology (Compas et al., 2017). Using maladaptive emotional regulation is related to greater rejection from peers, depression, anxiety, and behavioral problems (Braet et al., 2014). Low self-control is related to problems with impulsivity, risk-taking, inability to delay gratification, less emotional sensitivity, imprudent behaviors, behavioral problems, and defiance (Coyne & Wright, 2014). High self-control is related to academic achievement, psychological adjustment, positive interpersonal skills, and emotional stability (Uziel, 2018). Empathy is "the reactions of one individual to the observed experiences of another" (Davis, 1983, p. 113). It is associated with prosocial behavior, lower aggression, less antisocial behavior, and less instances of bullying (Malti et al., 2010; van Noorden et al., 2015).

The third domain of covitality, *belief-in-self*, also draws from the SEL literature, involving concepts such as self-awareness, self-efficacy, and persistence (Renshaw et al.,

2014). Self-awareness is the ability to perceive and attend to aspects of one's self (Abrams & Brown, 1989), while self-efficacy is the action, or the ability to effectively meet demands of the environment (Bandura et al., 1996). Self-awareness and mindfulness is associated with greater subjective well-being as well as decreased anxiety, depression, and stress (Carsley et al., 2018; Ciarrochi et al., 2011). Self-efficacy influences performance, motivation and learning, academic achievement, prosocial behaviors, defending behaviors, and social anxiety (Rajan et al., 2017; Rudy et al., 2012; Sitzmann & Yeo, 2013; Tsang et al., 2011). It can also buffer against mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety (Jones et al., 2013). Persistence involves diligently working to finish what has been started and perseverance in accomplishing goals (Duckworth et al., 2007; Park & Peterson, 2006). Persistence is related to educational attainment, self-control, and academic performance (Duckworth et al., 2007). It may mediate the relationship between motivation and performance, with persistence increasing learning (Vollmeyer & Rheinberg, 2000).

Lastly, *belief-in-others*, drawing from the childhood resilience literature, includes family support, peer support, and school support (Renshaw et al., 2014). Support in these realms (i.e., family, peer, and school) is defined by the value and quality of the caring and helpful nature of one's relationships with family, peers, and teachers, respectively (Farmer & Farmer, 1996). Social support in general is associated with greater subjective well being, stronger resiliency, better coping, less social exclusion, reduced risk taking behaviors, less emotional and behavioral difficulties, and may buffer against exposure to violence (Arslan, 2018, 2019; Lenzi et al., 2015).

Positive Outcomes

Covitality as a whole has been associated with a variety of positive outcomes (Furlong et al., 2013; Renshaw et al., 2014). Covitality is a better predictor of prosocial behavior, caring relationships, school acceptance, and less school rejection than individual traits such as gratitude, zest, optimism, and persistence were individually (Renshaw et al., 2014; Wilkins et al., 2015). Keyfitz et al. (2013) also found that covitality was related to a lower probability of anxiety and depression and greater resilience than were individual traits of self-efficacy, optimism, trust, success, and worthiness alone. Covitality has also been related to academic achievement, school engagement, perceptions of school safety, lower substance abuse, and higher reported quality of life (Furlong et al., 2013; Renshaw et al., 2014; Wilkins et al., 2015). In college students, Jones et al. (2013) found that covitality is predictive of higher well-being and lower levels of psychological problems resulting in more positive personal adjustment and less internalizing emotional symptoms. Covitality, in general, has been linked to emotional and behavioral problems, such as depression, anxiety, problematic internet use, inattention/hyperactivity, and school problems; higher covitality is associated with less problems and greater well-being, and lower covitality is associated with greater maladjustment (Arslan, 2019; Lenzi et al., 2015; Marino et al., 2018; You et al., 2014). Overall, covitality has a positive correlation with subjective well-being and a negative correlation with psychological distress in students (Arslan, 2019; Furlong, Dowdy, et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2013).

The framework of the theory of covitality is important to consider with elementary-aged populations. School support is of interest as school is a critical environment in children's lives. They spend a great deal of time at school where they develop social relationships and learn social norms. School is the place where students interact most with others, including teachers and peers (Tian et al., 2016). Having social support in school is related to a student's life satisfaction and promotes healthy development (Tian et al., 2016).

Although it allows for opportunities for growth, it can also be a place where less than ideal circumstances arise, such as bullying. The majority of the studies on bullying have been conducted in schools with children as their target population (Salmivalli, 2010). Schools provide contexts for bullying to occur due to the ongoing social relationships between the same groups of children over long periods of time (Gendron et al., 2011). The school climate research provides a unique viewpoint to consider both covitality and bullying victimization as it has a link to bullying in the literature as well as incorporates aspects of covitality such as belief-in-others (i.e., school support and peer support). Covitality is unique to consider alongside school climate as positive institutions promote, recognize, and reinforce displays of positive traits, which may be less likely to flourish when in isolation (Chafouleas & Bray, 2004).

School Climate

As mentioned previously, school climate is an important aspect of the way children perceive and feel about their school experience. The interactions between students, teachers, and staff in school as well as the quality of those interactions is an

important component contributing to whether perceptions about school will be positive or negative. School climate describes this milieu and is most commonly defined as “the quality and character of school life” and represents how students think and feel about their school (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 182). It is a heterogeneous construct encompassing student, teacher, and staff perceptions of safety, order and norms, connectedness, and the interpersonal relationships between individuals within the school. There are a large number of different definitions of school climate that describe a number of different types of components. However, when looking at the research, a large number of those definitions and components contain common elements across definitions that reflect the key factors of safety, order and norms, connectedness, and interpersonal relationships and how these influence the quality and character of school life.

Safety within a school includes the perceptions of violence as well as feeling safe socially, emotionally, intellectually, and physically (Ferrás & Selman, 2014; Thapa et al., 2013). Victims’ perceptions of school climate are linked to responses to being bullied where students were more likely to use aggression in response to being bullied when they felt unsafe in school (Johnson et al., 2013). Greater feelings of safety in school are associated with less bullying and promote learning and healthy development (Konishi et al., 2017; Thapa et al., 2013).

Order and norms relate to how rules are consistently and fairly enforced (Thapa et al., 2013). More physical and verbal aggression as well as victimization occurs in schools with less effective ability to maintain order (Bosworth & Judkins, 2014). Alternatively,

higher perceptions of fairness and clarity of rules has been associated with less victimization in secondary students (Goldweber et al., 2013).

Connectedness is the result when students believe that staff and peers care about them as individuals and care about their learning and ability to succeed (Thapa et al., 2013). School connectedness may be associated with violence prevention and serve as a protective factor against risk behaviors and aggressive responses when bullying victimization occurs as students' feelings of connectedness are predictive of levels of aggression and victimization (Acosta et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2013; Thapa et al., 2013). Sense of belonging is associated with lower bullying and peer victimization (Konishi et al., 2017). Help-seeking in response to bullying also increased when students felt more connected to adults within the school (Johnson et al., 2013).

Interpersonal relationships primarily include peer relationships and adult relationships. Supportive and strong interpersonal relationships appear to be a critical factor in positive school climates that result in low aggression and victimization (Bosworth & Judkins, 2014). Positive interpersonal relationships are related to greater help seeking in response to bullying as well as coping with bullying victimization (Eliot et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2013). Positive and strong student-teacher relationships are associated with lower levels of delinquency (Bosworth & Judkins, 2014).

School Climate Outcomes

A positive school climate fosters youth development and learning, and it “may serve as an important bridge between skill acquisition and skill deployment” (Low & Ryzin, 2014, p. 316). It provides a safe, supporting, and caring environment that helps

stop the cycle of violence within a school (Johnson et al., 2013). Furthermore, a positive school climate helps students to develop higher levels of assertiveness, empathy, and other social skills (Acosta et al., 2019). School climate has been linked in the literature to a variety of outcomes such as academic achievement, help seeking, prosocial attitudes, social and emotional distress, aggressive and delinquent behaviors, and bullying.

School climate has been associated with a variety of academic outcomes. Strong and positive student-teacher relationships predict greater academic success (Bosworth & Judkins, 2014). Connectedness among students created a positive classroom climate, which contributed to improved grades (Caprara et al., 2015). Additionally, positive school climates have been associated with better adjustment, attachment to school, commitment to learning, motivation, academic achievement, academic values, and academic competence (Eliot et al., 2010; Ferrás & Selman, 2014; Thapa et al., 2013). Additionally, this positive effect of school climate on academic achievement affects students both short-term and long-term, with this positive effect persisting for years (Thapa et al., 2013).

Additionally, help seeking is higher with a more positive school climate and for those whose teachers and staff are supportive and trustworthy; thus, predictably, students are reluctant to seek help when the school has a negative school climate and staff appears unconcerned with or tolerant of bullying (Eliot et al., 2010). The research suggests that girls seek help more often than boys; however, a positive school climate appears to mitigate this difference. Eliot et al. (2010) found that schools with high levels of support, the difference between help seeking for girls and boys was cut in half. For schools with

low levels of support, the difference in help seeking between genders was five times greater. Prosocial behavior is also greater in schools with a positive climate. Prosocial behavior fosters a supportive social and learning environment where students feel accepted and supported by classmates and teachers, which in turn fosters a positive school climate (Caprara et al., 2015).

Alternatively, the probability of engaging in risky behaviors is lower with a more positive school climate, as it serves as a protective factor towards substance abuse and aggression (Klein et al., 2012). With greater exposure to environmental assets that a positive school climate provides, students are less likely to engage in risky behavior, such as drug or alcohol use and delinquent behavior, and more likely to engage in healthy and positive behavior (Klein et al., 2012). A negative school climate is significantly related to higher levels of delinquency, misconduct, and aggression (Ferrás & Selman, 2014). Aggressive responses tend to disrupt the learning environment (Johnson et al., 2013). Behavioral problems are less frequent when students perceive that their school has greater structure, fair discipline, and positive student-teacher relationships (Thapa et al., 2013).

As mentioned, a negative school climate is not conducive to a supportive learning environment that fosters children academically, socially, emotionally, or behaviorally. A positive school climate provides the foundation for students to succeed, and it is influenced greatly by the components that make up the school environment, such as the individuals themselves and their traits and behaviors.

Connecting Bullying Victimization, School Climate, and Covitality

The link between school climate and bullying has a strong connection in the literature, and a positive school climate can help to improve anti-bullying efforts (Johnson et al., 2013). More positive perceptions of school climate significantly predict lower likelihoods of reported bullying (Acosta et al., 2019). Bullying is a school-wide issue, and given the nature of school climate, which encompasses the whole school as well, promoting positive and healthy outcomes within the school climate domains may mitigate negative effects of bullying (Bosworth & Judkins, 2014; Low & Ryzin, 2014). Positive school climates have been associated with less bullying, victimization, aggression, and violence (Cornell & Bradshaw, 2015; Thapa et al., 2013). In a more positive school climate, there are more prosocial responses to bullying, greater willingness to intervene (i.e., defend the victim), and greater help seeking (Ferrás & Selman, 2014; Low & Ryzin, 2014).

On the contrary, negative school climate and high prevalence of bullying portray the belief and attitude that bullying, aggression, and peer victimization are the norm and cultivate less supportive environments where the perception is that others are unlikely to intervene (Johnson et al., 2013). When students display the aggressive behavior associated with bullying, it fosters a negative perception of the culture of the school, where students feel less safe and less satisfied with the social climate of their school (Zorza et al., 2015). Some research suggests that aggression and victimization are dependent on a student's feelings of connectedness within the school, which is an important piece of school climate (Thapa et al., 2013).

Covitality is related to bullying as higher covitality is associated with feeling safe at school, while lower covitality is associated with increased reports of bullying (Furlong et al., 2013). Covitality has a positive relationship with prosocial behaviors, caring relationships, and acceptance at school and a negative relationship with rejection, victimization, and perpetration at school (Arslan, 2019). Students who possess a higher quality of assets, or positive traits, in multiple domains, as opposed to those assets alone, showed lower odds victimization; “for both physical and relational victimization, adolescents reporting assets in all four domains were 34% less likely to have been victims of violence at school” (Lenzi et al., 2015, p. 418).

Although having a positive perception of covitality is associated with positive outcomes and influences bullying, being victimized can also influence covitality. Research suggests that being bullied may result in a decline in belief-in-self and engaged living as well as a significant decline in belief-in-others with frequent victimization (Fullchange & Furlong, 2016). Victims tend to have lower self-efficacy, higher emotional dysregulation, and less cohesive family structures, and being victimized may undermine the assets that these students do have (Fullchange & Furlong, 2016). This may be because being bullied results in a diminished sense of well-being and optimism with higher emotional distress, and those with frequent victimization experience less teacher, family, and peer support (Flaspohler et al., 2009; Fullchange & Furlong, 2016; You et al., 2008).

However, Fullchange and Furlong (2016) indicated that despite these findings, youth tend to be resilient and cope with adversity since effect sizes were negligible or small. Having a variety of positive traits that work in combination may be beneficial so

students can draw upon different strengths to cope with and handle different types of social situations that they may encounter. The assets in the belief-in-self (i.e., self-awareness, self-efficacy, and persistence) and engaged living (i.e., optimism, zest, and gratitude) domains may discourage bullying victimization towards the individual as having this combination of positive traits might make these students less easy targets for a bully, as bullies tend to choose victims who are shy, insecure, and have lower self-esteem (Kaufman et al., 2018; Lenzi et al., 2015). Lenzi et al. (2015) also suggest that emotional competence (i.e., emotional regulation, self-control, and empathy) may buffer frequent victimization as these students may be better equipped to react appropriately to being bullied. Additionally, social support, or belief-in-others (i.e., family support, peer support, and school support), decreases the risk of victimization as family, peers, and teachers can provide support and help the student cope with being bullied, whether it is to comfort the victim, defend the victim, or provide intervention (Lenzi et al., 2015).

Considering all these facets together, bullying victimization shows a large and strong direct link in the literature to school climate. The research presented shows that students in a negative school environment report greater instances of bullying; thus, students who are victimized also perceive their school to be a more negative, hostile environment (Acosta et al., 2019; Nansel et al., 2001). The covitality literature suggests that students can capitalize on their cumulative positive strengths, which leads to more positive outcomes including the ability to cope with negative situations they encounter, such as bullying (Fullchange & Furlong, 2016). Thus, covitality may be key in helping influence the magnitude of the relationship between bullying victimization and school

climate. Having a high accumulation of positive traits (i.e., covitality) leads students to have a greater number of resources, such as their emotional competence, social resources, and other resilient traits, to pull from which could result in believing school is not so bad. Covitality may be a buffer for the negative outcomes that come with bullying victimization and, thus, experiencing a negative school climate as a result. Thus, this study seeks to address the research question of whether covitality moderates the relationship between bullying victimization and school climate.

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Participants

The overall sample consisted of secondary data that came from a previously collected sample of 214 fourth and fifth grade students. The data was collected in May 2017, prior to COVID-19, and consisted of students from five schools across a single rural Southeastern school district. The purpose of the larger study the data was taken from was to connect positive psychology factors with bullying and cyberbullying to explore what specific factors buffer the negative effects of bullying and cyberbullying. To participate in the research study, parent consent and student assent letters were provided to all eligible students in the district ($N = 654$). Across both grades, parent consent was returned for 37% of the students. Assent was provided by 96 fourth graders and 118 fifth graders; thus, approximately 90.5% of students whose parents provided consent chose to participate. Students who participated ($n = 214$) were brought into a computer lab to complete several surveys during a non-instructional period, where teachers utilize time for students to complete non-instructional activities such as independent reading. Students self-reported basic demographic information such as sex, grade, and age, while teachers provided some other demographic information about the participating students including ethnicity and Special Education classification, with parental consent to do so.

Participants were split relatively equally between fourth grade (44.9%) and fifth grade (55.1%) participants as well as between genders (male: 49.1%; female: 50.9%). Ages of participants included those who were 9 years old (11.2%), 10 years old (46.7), 11 years old (38.8), and 12 years old (2.8%), with one outlier identifying themselves as 15 years old (0.5%). A little over half of the participants were identified by their teachers as being White (56.1%), followed by Black (14%), Hispanic (9.3%), Mixed (5.1%), Asian (3.7%), and Middle Eastern (2.8%). Teachers did not provide an ethnicity for a small subset of students (8.9%). Because parents also had the option to consent to teachers being able to provide some basic demographic information about their child, this small percentage where demographic information was not provided may have been due to parents not consenting to having demographic information released about their child. Teachers identified a small percentage of students as having a Special Education classification (6.1%).

Measures

Students completed a variety of self-report measures including surveys assessing traditional bullying victimization (Student Survey of Bullying Behavior – Revised 2 [SSBB-R2]; Varjas et al., 2006), cyberbullying victimization (Cyberbullying and Online Aggression Survey Instrument; Hinduja & Patchin, 2015), bullying mindset (Yeager et al., 2011), covitality (Furlong et al., 2013), school climate (Georgia Department of Education et al., 2014), and student’s behavioral and emotional functioning (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire [SDQ]; Goodman, 1997). Only the bullying victimization,

covitality, and school climate measures were utilized for the current research as they were of primary interest.

Bullying Victimization

A measure for traditional bullying victimization was taken from the SSBB-R2 by Varjas et al. (2006). Items asked about relational bullying (e.g., spreading rumors, social isolation), verbal bullying (e.g., teasing, name calling), and physical bullying (e.g., hitting, kicking, stealing). The scale uses 4-point Likert scale items, with responses of *never*, *once*, *a few times*, and *many times*. Scores could range from 7 to 28, with higher scores indicating higher bullying victimization. Internal consistency was acceptable for the current sample ($\alpha = .78$). The SSBB-R2 has been used to measure victimization in a variety of samples (Antoniadou et al., 2019; Fanti & Henrich, 2015; Varjas et al., 2009)

Covitality

The Social Emotional Health Survey-Primary (Furlong et al., 2013) was used as a measure of covitality. Items assessed feelings of gratitude, optimism, zest, and persistence as well as prosocial behavior as a supplemental validity check and sub-scale. The scale uses 4-point Likert scale items with responses of *almost never*, *sometimes*, *often*, and *very often*. Scores could range from 20 to 80 with higher scores indicating higher positive covitality factors. Psychometric properties were assessed with the responses of elementary students across four districts in Central California ($n = 1,995$; Furlong et al., 2013). Internal consistency reliability of each subscale was questionable to good, with Cronbach's Alpha ranging from .66 (Optimism subscale) to .80 (Prosocial

Behavior subscale). The reliability for total covitality in the study was good ($\alpha = .88$).

Internal consistency was good for the current sample ($\alpha = .89$).

School Climate

A measure of school climate for elementary-aged students came from the Georgia Department of Education et al. (2014). Items assessed students' overall perception of school including feelings of connectedness, safety, orderliness, and peer and adult relationships. The scale uses 4-point Likert scale items with responses of *never*, *sometimes*, *often*, and *always*. Scores could range from 11 to 44 with higher items indicating greater positive perceptions of school climate. Psychometric properties were assessed using a total of 197,512 fourth and fifth grade students across the state of Georgia (La Salle et al., 2016). Internal reliability was good ($\alpha = .80$). Internal consistency was good for the current sample ($\alpha = .82$).

Analytic Plan

Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, standard deviations, ranges) were calculated for all demographic variables. These analyses allowed for assessment of responses among the different groups of participants present in the study. The research questions were as follows:

1. Does bullying victimization predict school climate?
2. Does covitality moderate the relationship between bullying victimization and school climate?

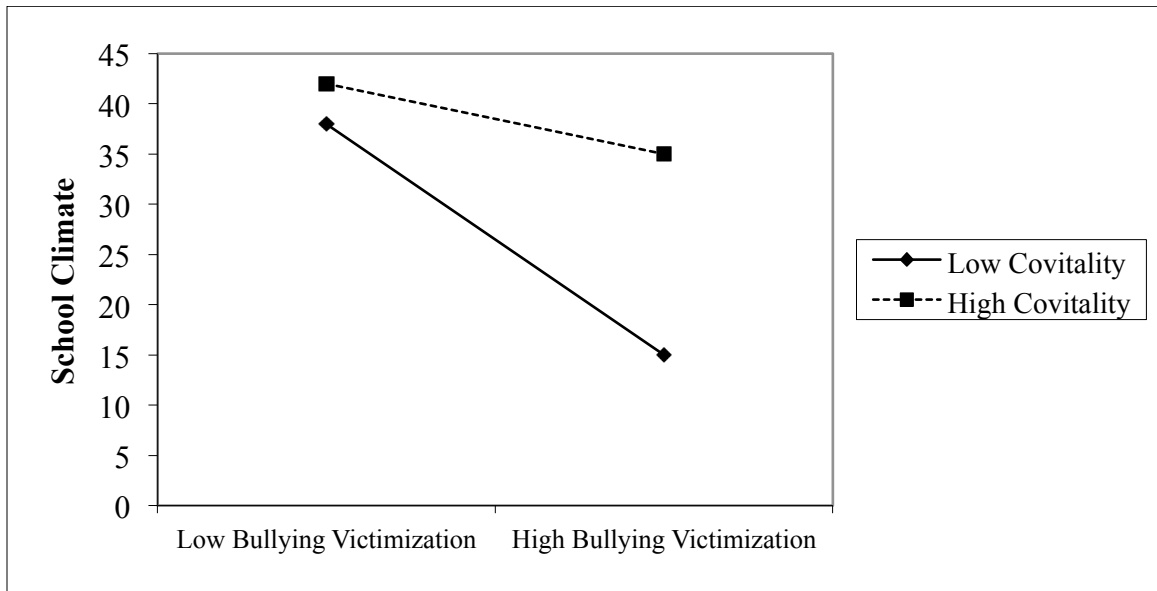
The first research question was addressed using a simple linear regression. It was hypothesized that greater bullying victimization would lead to more negative perceptions

of school climate. Thus, it was predicted that students who were victimized more often would have greater negative perceptions of school climate, and students who were less victimized would have more positive perceptions of school climate. Nansel et al. (2001) found that victims reported a less favorable school environment when compared to bullies and uninvolved youth.

The second research question was addressed using a simple hierarchical regression model. It was hypothesized that having higher covitality scores would moderate the relationship between bullying victimization and school climate (see Figure 1). Thus, if a student reported having greater bullying victimization, but had high covitality scores, then it was hypothesized that the student would have less negative perceptions (i.e., more positive perceptions) of school climate. Alternatively, if a student reported having greater bullying victimization, but had low covitality scores, then it was hypothesized that the student would have more negative perceptions of school climate. Given the research surrounding the differences in bullying based on gender (Charach et al., 1995; Lapidot-Lefler & Coley-Cohen, 2015; Pepler & Craig, 1997; Seals & Young, 2003; Wang et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2020), an exploratory analysis on gender was conducted to determine if gender had an impact on the relationship between bullying victimization, covitality, and school climate.

Figure 1

Hypothesized Moderation of Covitality Between Bullying Victimization and School Climate



CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Prior to conducting a hierarchical linear regression, the relevant assumptions of this statistical analysis were tested. A statistical power analysis was performed for sample size estimation. With an alpha = .05 and power = .95, the projected sample size needed for a medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$) was approximately 74 (Cohen, 1992; Faul et al., 2007). Thus, the sample size of 214 was deemed adequate. One extreme outlier was identified by visually examining the data and was removed. The outlier was over four standard deviations below the mean of the school climate scale. Tests of normality were conducted, and variables were determined to be relatively normal in distribution; skewness and kurtosis coefficients were within acceptable ranges (Field, 2013). There were no missing data. After confirming that the assumptions of the regression were met, all predictor variables were mean centered to avoid non-essential multicollinearity. The first step of the regression analysis included bullying victimization and covitality. The bullying victimization x covitality interaction term was entered in the second step.

Means, standard deviations, and correlations are presented in Table 1. The bullying victimization variable ranged from 7 to 25. The covitality variable ranged from 26 to 64. The school climate variable ranged from 20 to 44. A visual analysis of the data suggests that students, overall, were lower on the bullying victimization scale than higher; reported higher levels of covitality than lower; and reported higher levels of school climate than lower.

Table 1*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables*

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
Total							
1. BV	213	13.35	4.50	–			
2. CoV	213	51.80	8.11	-.241	–		
3. SC	213	36.08	4.84	-.364	.745	–	
4. Int.	213	-8.76	41.50	-.056	.074	.116	–
Females							
1. BV	108	14.00	4.35	–			
2. CoV	108	51.72	8.04	-.179	–		
3. SC	108	36.00	4.77	-.302	.771	–	
4. Int.	108	-6.24	38.12	-.044	.147	.137	–
Males							
1. BV	105	12.69	4.58	–			
2. CoV	105	51.89	8.21	-.303	–		
3. SC	105	36.16	4.92	-.424	.719	–	
4. Int.	105	-11.36	44.74	-.084	.014	.100	–

Note. BV = Bullying Victimization; CoV = Covitality; SC = School Climate; Int. =

Bullying Victimization x Covitality interaction variable.

An exploratory analysis on gender was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between girls and boys. Gender was coded with 1 as male, 2 as female, and 3 as other. To determine if there was a significant difference between girls and boys on the target variables, a simple linear regression was conducted. School climate and covitality did not significantly differ based on gender. Gender significantly predicted bullying victimization ($\beta = .15, p < .05$). Gender explained 2.3% of the variance in bullying victimization, $R^2 = .023, F(1, 212) = 4.96, p < .05$. A visual analysis showed that girls indicated higher bullying victimization scores than boys.

Research Question 1

To investigate whether bullying victimization was related to school climate, a simple linear regression was performed. Bullying victimization significantly predicted school climate ($\beta = -.39, p < .001$). Bullying victimization explained 13.2% of the variance in perceptions of school climate, $R^2 = .132, F(1, 211) = 32.13, p < .001$. Students with higher bullying victimization indicated lower perceptions of school climate. This finding did not differ by gender (Females: $\beta = -.30, R^2 = .091, F(1, 106) = 10.65, p < .001$; Males: $\beta = -.42, R^2 = .18, F(1, 103) = 22.64, p < .001$).

Research Question 2

To investigate whether covitality moderated the relationship between bullying victimization and school climate, a simple moderator analysis was performed using a hierarchical linear regression, which is presented in Table 2. At stage one, bullying victimization and covitality contributed significantly to the regression model, $R^2 = .59, F(2, 210) = 151.53, p < .001$ and explained 59% of the variance in perceptions of school

climate. Less bullying victimization and greater covitality scores indicated more positive perceptions of school climate. This finding did not differ by gender (Females: $R^2 = .62$, $F(2, 105) = 86.38$, $p < .001$; Males: $R^2 = .57$, $F(2, 102) = 66.15$, $p < .001$) The addition of the bullying victimization and covitality interaction variable, did not contribute significantly to the regression model, suggesting that covitality does not moderate the relationship between bullying victimization and school climate. Gender did not affect this finding, and the relationships still remained non-significant.

Table 2*Hierarchical Regression Model: Moderation Analysis Predicting School Climate*

	Total			Females			Males					
	<i>R</i> ²	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>R</i> ²	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>R</i> ²	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
Step 1	.591*				.622*				.565*			
BV		-.210	.049	-.195*		-.187	.067	-.170*		-.244	.074	-.227*
CoV		.416	.027	.698*		.439	.036	.740*		.390	.041	.651*
Step 2	.594				.622				.570			
BV		-.208	.049	-.193*		-.186	.067	-.170*		-.238	.074	-.221*
CoV		.414	.027	.694*		.438	.037	.737*		.391	.041	.652*
Int.		.006	.005	.053		.003	.008	.021		.008	.007	.073

Note. BV = Bullying Victimization; CoV = Covitality; Int. = Bullying Victimization x Covitality interaction variable; *B* = unstandardized regression coefficients; *SE* = standard error of the unstandardized regression coefficients; β = standardized regression coefficients.

**p* < 0.001

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Children's lives are composed of many experiences that help shape their perception of the world. They spend a great deal of their childhood in school, during which they encounter a variety of different experiences, some of which are positive, while others are negative (Cornell & Bradshaw, 2015; Glander, 2017). Bullying is one negative experience some children face.

Bullying can be explained in many ways, but is most commonly defined as unwanted, negative, and aggressive actions, which often repeats over time, and involves a real or perceived power imbalance occurring among school-aged children (Olweus, 1993). It affects approximately 20% of students (Wang et al., 2020). Witnesses are present in approximately 85-88% of all bullying episodes, suggesting that many students see others being bullied (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Hawkins et al., 2001). Bullying is a social phenomenon that is influenced by the people present and the climate of the environment in which it takes place (Salmivalli, 2010). Bullying victimization over time can cause a myriad of negative outcomes on academic achievement (Buhs et al., 2006; Hysing et al., 2019; Klein et al., 2012; Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010; van der Werf, 2014), physical health (Copeland et al., 2014; Evans et al., 2019; Forero et al., 1999; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; Hysing et al., 2019; Rivers et al., 2009; Wolke et al., 2001; Wolke et al., 2013), and mental health, which puts these students more at risk for social-emotional problems (Eliot

et al., 2010; Ferráns & Selman, 2014; Hysing et al., 2019; Klein et al., 2012; Konishi et al., 2017; Rivers et al., 2009; Sainio et al., 2010; Thapa et al., 2013).

Children who are bullied have resources and attributes from which they pull from that, in turn, influence their reactions and outcomes, whether positive or negative, to the situation. It was hypothesized that the synergistic combination of positive traits (i.e., covitality) may equip students who are the victim of bullying situations with the resources to have more positive outcomes. Covitality is described as the cooperative effect of positive mental health that is the result of co-occurring positive traits that increase the likelihood of positive outcomes (Furlong et al., 2013; Furlong, Dowdy, et al., 2014). Covitality has been associated with a variety of positive outcomes including greater prosocial behavior, better academic outcomes, lower probability of social-emotional difficulties, and greater resilience (Furlong et al., 2013; Keyfitz et al., 2013; Renshaw et al., 2014; Wilkins et al., 2015).

The attributes children have influence the way they interpret and interact with the world, such as with how they react or cope with bullying or how they approach and think about their school. School climate is an important aspect of the way children perceive and feel about their school experience. It is commonly defined as “the quality and character of school life” and represents how students think and feel about their school (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 182). It encompasses student, teacher, and staff perceptions of safety, order and norms, connectedness, and the interpersonal relationships between individuals within the school and how these elements influence school life. A positive school climate has been linked in the literature to a variety of outcomes such as greater academic

achievement, greater help seeking, more prosocial attitudes, less social and emotional distress, less aggressive and delinquent behaviors, and less instances of bullying (Acosta et al., 2019; Bosworth & Judkins, 2014; Caprara et al., 2105; Eliot et al., 2010; Ferrás & Selman, 2014; Fullchange & Furlong, 2016; Thapa et al., 2013). Having a positive school climate is important in helping students succeed academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally.

Bullying victimization and school climate are directly linked in the literature (Acosta et al., 2019; Thapa et al., 2013). Students in a negative school environment report greater instances of bullying; thus, students who are victimized also perceive their school to be a more negative, hostile environment (Acosta et al., 2019, Nansel et al., 2001). The covitality literature suggests that students can capitalize on their cumulative positive strengths, which leads to more positive outcomes including the ability to cope with negative situations they encounter (Fullchange & Furlong, 2016).

Thus, based on the literature review, it was hypothesized that covitality may be key in helping influence the magnitude of the relationship between bullying victimization and school climate. Having a high accumulation of positive traits (i.e., covitality) leads students to have a greater number of resources, such as their emotional competence, social resources, and other resilient traits, to pull from which could result in believing school is not so bad. It was hypothesized that covitality may be a buffer for the negative outcomes that come with bullying victimization and, thus, experiencing a negative school climate as a result.

Summary of Findings

The primary purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between bullying victimization, school climate, and covitality. Specifically, this study looked at whether bullying victimization was related to school climate as well as whether covitality moderated the relationship between bullying victimization and school climate. The research showed support for the first hypothesis, but not the second hypothesis.

Analyses to determine whether bullying victimization, school climate, or covitality are different in regards to gender resulted in a significant difference in only bullying victimization. Girls indicated higher bullying victimization than boys. This is consistent with the most recent NCEs 2017 data, which indicated that in students aged 12 through 18 years, females reported slightly higher levels of bullying than males (Wang et al., 2020). This is notable as this data also suggests that females report higher levels of bullying in slightly younger students as well as in older school-aged students, as this study included students aged 9 to 12 years of age.

Not surprisingly, results of the current study indicated that bullying victimization is related to school climate. Students with higher bullying victimization indicated lower perceptions of school climate; and thus, students with lower bullying victimization indicated higher perceptions of school climate. This finding did not differ by gender in the current sample. It is well known that bullying is related to school climate. Greater feelings of safety (which is a component of school climate) from not having to worry about being bullied results in more positive feelings of school climate (Konishi et al., 2017; Thapa et al., 2013). Students who are connected to their school and have positive

interpersonal relationships with peers and staff are more likely to seek help when being bullied, which may result in cessation of the bullying as well as an increase in perceptions of school climate (Eliot et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2013). Bullying not only impacts school climate itself, but also other factors are influenced by bullying that would, in turn, also influence how students feel about their school including academic achievement, school refusal, truancy, academic engagement, relationships with classmates, and participation in class (Buhs et al., 2006; Fullchange & Furlong, 2016; Klein et al., 2012; Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010; van der Werf, 2014).

Nansel et al. (2001) found that victims reported a less favorable school environment when compared to bullies and uninvolved youth. Additionally, more positive perceptions of school climate significantly predict lower likelihoods of reported bullying (Acosta et al., 2019). Positive school climates have been associated with less bullying, victimization, aggression, and violence (Cornell & Bradshaw, 2015; Thapa et al., 2013). In a more positive school climate, there are more prosocial responses to bullying, greater willingness to intervene (i.e., defend the victim), and greater help seeking (Ferrás & Selman, 2014; Low & Ryzin, 2014).

Negative school climate and high prevalence of bullying portray the belief and attitude that bullying, aggression, and peer victimization are the norm and cultivate less supportive environments where the perception is that others are unlikely to intervene (Johnson et al., 2013). When students display the aggressive behavior associated with bullying, it fosters a negative perception of the culture of the school, where students feel less safe and less satisfied with the social climate of their school (Zorza et al., 2015). It

makes sense that greater bullying victimization is related to a more negative school climate. It is a perpetual cycle where students who are bullied feel worse about their school, and those schools with negative school climates allow for an opportunity for those bullying behaviors to thrive due to less positive interpersonal relationships, less feelings of safety, reduced order and norms, and lowered feelings of connectedness.

The results of the current study also found that covitality alongside bullying victimization was significantly related to school climate, and this did not differ by gender in the current sample. Covitality is related to bullying as higher covitality is associated with feeling safe at school, while lower covitality is associated with increased reports of bullying (Furlong et al., 2013). Covitality is also related to school climate with research showing less school rejection, higher school acceptance, higher caring relationships, and more prosocial behavior, all of which are attributes related to school climate (Renshaw et al., 2014; Wilkins et al., 2015). Covitality has a positive relationship with prosocial behaviors, caring relationships, and acceptance at school and a negative relationship with rejection, victimization, and perpetration at school (Arslan, 2019). These characteristics are also related to bullying, further strengthening the connection between bullying victimization and covitality (Caprara et al., 2015; Gendron et al., 2011; Low & Ryzin, 2014)

The hypothesis that covitality would moderate the relationship between bullying victimization and covitality was not supported, and gender did not influence this finding. It may be that these are early trends between bullying victimization, covitality, and school climate that could be supported more strongly as students become older as

covitality has more research surrounding its theory with middle and high school aged students as opposed to elementary aged students (Furlong, You, et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2013; Renshaw et al., 2014). It may also be that covitality and bullying victimization work in combination to predict school climate rather than covitality influencing the effect bullying victimization has on school climate (i.e., covitality as a mediator).

Those with greater covitality may also be less victimized and therefore feel their school is a better place. Additionally, it may also be that these students do not attribute negative behavior towards them as bullying if they are high in covitality. Positive traits such as empathy, optimism, self-control, and self-awareness may attribute the negative behavior they receive as situation-specific, or they are able to better take the perspective of the bully (e.g., they are having a bad day as opposed to they do not like me; Crick & Dodge, 1994; Frisé et al., 2007; Gifford-Smith & Rabiner, 2004; Guy et al., 2017; Terranova, 2009; Thornberg & Knutsen, 2010). The research supports this theory as the covitality literature suggests that students can capitalize on their cumulative positive strengths, which leads to more positive outcomes including the ability to cope with negative situations they encounter (Fullchange & Furlong, 2016).

Limitations

A major limitation of this study was the assumption that a causal pathway exists between bullying victimization and school climate, without the collection of longitudinal data. Only cross-sectional data was obtained. If longitudinal data were collected on this population, then a stronger causal inference could be made to determine the specific influences each of the variables have on one another.

Another limitation is determining the cause of effect within the variables. The literature supports different directions of effects between the variables. For example, this study found that bullying victimization predicts school climate. However, there is literature that suggests that school climate can also predict bullying victimization (Acosta et al., 2019, Thapa et al., 2013) or covitality (Chafouleas & Bray, 2004). Covitality may also predict bullying (Furlong et al., 2013; Fullchange & Furlong, 2016; Lenzi et al., 2015) or school climate (Arslan, 2019). The direction of effect for the three variables is not entirely clear in the literature, and it may be a cycle where each is intertwined and affecting one another simultaneously. The current study examined bullying victimization as the independent variable, school climate as the dependent variable, and covitality as a moderator because when considering each of the literature on bullying, covitality, and school climate together, it more logically leads the reader to hypothesize that being victimized predicts how a student will feel about school (Nansel et al., 2001), and their internal assets would influence that relationship due to possibly being able to utilize their resources to react differently or make different attributions about the situation (Arslan, 2019; Terranova, 2009).

The study is also limited by the way the data were measured. Firstly, the primary version of the covitality measure, which is normed for elementary-aged students, only utilizes some of the subdomains of covitality, rather than all of the subareas of the domains, like the adolescent version does (Furlong et al., 2013; Furlong, You, et al., 2014; You et al., 2014). The elementary version of the covitality scale only measures gratitude, zest, optimism, persistence, and prosocial behavior (Furlong et al., 2013). No

explanation was given as to why other domains or subdomains were not included, and, to the author's current knowledge, no other research is available that suggests a reasoning behind excluding other subdomains with this younger population. Future research should explore how all aspects of covitality impact elementary-aged students.

Additionally, the measures, and thus the variables being considered, all consisted of self-reported data by the students. There may be a self-serving attribution bias, in that students want to portray their experiences or traits as more positive and socially desirable (Salmivalli et al., 1996). The data suggested that students in the sample generally reported lower bullying victimization scores and had generally high perceptions of their covitality traits and school climate. It may also be that because students were reporting higher perceptions of their covitality traits, they may not have a hostile attribution bias to the possible bullying situations (i.e., that the bully is intentionally acting in a hostile manner), but rather do not perceive the encounters as hostile (Guy et al., 2017).

The data is also limited by the demographics of the students. The majority of the students were White, regular education students. There was not a large enough sample to determine if minority students or special education students experience differences in bullying victimization, covitality, or school climate. Additionally, the sample only consisted of fourth and fifth grade students in one school district, which limited the sample size as well as the generalizability of the results to other grade levels or geographic locations.

Future Directions

There are a variety of studies looking at covitality, school climate, and bullying victimization alone or with two of these variables. There are no studies, to the author's current knowledge, that address how covitality may moderate specific relationships between bullying victimization and school climate. Although the study did not find support that covitality moderates the relationship between bullying victimization and school climate, there is preliminary support for the relationship between bullying victimization and covitality, together, as it relates to school climate. Future research may further explore this relationship by expanding the study to look at these relationships over time, with different grade levels and ages, as well as determining the effects of bullying victimization, covitality, and school climate on minority individuals and special education students. These populations may have differing experiences as it relates to bullying, covitality, and school climate than majority individuals, and it will be important to intervention efforts to delineate how this relationship may affect diverse individuals in different ways.

Additionally, covitality may be developmental in nature, in that it changes and becomes more complex as students age. Children develop in many different ways as they grow and learn about the world, and their cognitive and social-emotional development is of particular interest when considering how covitality may be developmental in nature. Cognitively, infants and young children have much less developed cognitive and executive functioning skills (e.g., fluid reasoning, memory, processing speed) that are refined and become more stable as they develop into adulthood (Flook et al., 2019;

Schneider et al., 2014). Their logical and abstract thinking becomes more developed from childhood to adulthood (Broderick & Blewitt, 2014). This may have implications for their covitality in that it may affect areas within covitality such as ability to be optimistic about future events, have empathy for others, for their self-control, for their emotional regulation, among other characteristics, especially considering that their social emotional skills also develop over time (Flook et al., 2019). As they become older, they may be able to utilize their skills and positive assets more effectively and efficiently and be able to apply them to a variety of situations due to their ability to better think logically and abstractly (Benson & Scales, 2012; Broderick & Blewitt, 2014; Flook et al., 2019).

Exploring covitality with young children and examining this concept as students grow and develop may be important in determining areas of strength to foster in children at different stages of development. It may also be helpful in determining appropriate ways of intervening on bullying or a negative school climate as the developmental nature of covitality could be helpful in determining how best to capitalize on students' strengths at different levels to mitigate negative effects of bullying or negative school climate.

Implications for Theory, Practice, and Research

Based on the results presented, there are interesting implications for practice, theory, and research. The preliminary findings of the relationship between bullying victimization, covitality, and school climate would be helpful to consider for SEL curriculums or bullying interventions in the school setting. The literature reviewed suggest that supporting students' mental health and well-being may play a role in mitigating negative effects, including negative perceptions of school, and SEL in schools

may be an avenue where the covitality of students can be supported and fostered (Arslan, 2018; Furlong, Dowdy, et al., 2014; Furlong, You, et al., 2014; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). School psychologists can be a key part in participating in the development and/or administration of these curriculums, and can use the implications of this study, as well as the other literature, to provide a unique viewpoint through which to help students and school systems.

Additionally, the findings show the importance of considering the whole situation and/or person when negative scenarios arise. For example, in bullying situations at school, it would be important to consider the school climate and the resources available to the children (i.e., their covitality) when handling the situation rather than placing blame or only looking at the bully and the victim. There may be other ways of mitigating bullying in schools by addressing it from a holistic perspective as opposed to a person-specific perspective (Caprara et al., 2015; Cornell & Bradshaw, 2015). School psychologists can be influential in dealing with bullying scenarios in school as their knowledge and expertise in child development and mental health can help students and staff handle address bullying in a positive manner when it arises, and the current study provides information about considering how other facets influence bullying. Finally, the expansion of the research on these concepts support the idea that you can never start too young to begin teaching important lessons and fostering positive experiences. This will support children's covitality, well-being, and prosocial behaviors that may lead to less bullying behaviors as well as a greater accumulation of positive resources to tackle difficult situations they experience as they develop.

Conclusion

Bullying, covitality, and school climate are three concepts that overlap in the research with implications that could influence children in schools. Bullying is a negative experience often seen in schools. Bullying can influence the way a child sees themselves and their school, and the way in which students perceive their school is highly impactful of whether they will have positive or negative experiences. The internal attributes within a child influence how a student will respond and interpret their experiences. The concept of covitality suggests that students who have a greater number of positive traits are more likely to experience positive outcomes and have greater resilience to negative outcomes. It was hypothesized that an accumulation of positive traits may equip students who are the victim of bullying with the resources to overcome the negative experience that might negatively shape their view of their school.

The purpose of this study was to address whether covitality moderates the relationship between bullying victimization and school climate. It was hypothesized that students who have been bullied, but have high covitality traits, may be more likely to see their school as not such a bad place, when compared to students who are bullied but do not have as high covitality traits. The results of the study found that students generally reported less bullying victimization, higher covitality, and higher school climate. There was a relationship between bullying victimization and school climate. When covitality was added, bullying victimization and covitality, together, predicted school climate. However, covitality was not shown to moderate the relationship between bullying

victimization and school climate. These findings did not differ by gender in the current sample.

This study may have been limited by the direction of effect, self-report measures used as well as the lack of longitudinal data. Future research could include expanding the population to include a larger sample and different ages or grade levels. It would be important in future studies to analyze how bullying, covitality, and school climate impact diverse individuals. Additionally, covitality may be developmental in nature and influence students or present in students differently at different developmental stages. This study is important in contributing to the research as these three variables have not been studied in combination, to the author's knowledge. The research looking at bullying, covitality, and school climate together is important in practice when considering the social emotional learning curriculum or bullying interventions in schools.

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APPENDIX A

Bullying Victimization Scale

Bullying Victimization Survey

Please mark how often the following has happened to you:

	Never	Often	A few times	Many times
Someone has spread bad rumors about me, so that others in my school will dislike me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone in my school has called me names or made fun of me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone in my school has teased or provoked me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone in my school purposefully kept me from playing with them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone in my school made fun of the way I look or act.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone in my school has hit or kicked me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone in my school has hidden or stolen my money or belongings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Student Survey of Bullying Behavior – Revised 2 (SSBB-R2) by Varjas and colleagues (2006)

APPENDIX B
Covitality Survey

Covitality Survey

Here are some questions that ask students, like you, about what they think, feel, and do at school. Read each sentence and click on the one response that tells how true the sentence is for you.

	Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
I am lucky to go to my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am thankful that I get to learn new things at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We are lucky to have nice teachers at my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel thankful for my good friends at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I have problems at school, I know they will get better in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect good things to happen at my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Each week, I expect to feel happy in class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect to have fun with my friends at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get excited when I learn something new at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get really excited about my school projects.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I wake up in the morning excited to go to school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get excited when I am doing my class assignments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I finish all my class assignments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I get a bad (low) grade, I try even harder the next time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I keep working until I get my schoolwork right.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do my class assignments even when they are really hard for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I follow the classroom rules.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I follow the playground rules at recess and lunch (break times) times.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I listen when my teacher is talking.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am nice to other students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Social Emotional Health Survey-Primary (Furlong et al., 2013)

APPENDIX C

School Climate Survey

School Climate Survey

Please read each item carefully and mark one choice for each item. Please answer all of the questions.

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
I like school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like I do well in school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school wants me to do well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school has clear rules for behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel safe at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers treat me with respect.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Good behavior is noticed at my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students in my class behave so that teachers can teach.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get along with other students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students treat each other well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is an adult at my school who will help me if I need it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Georgia Department of Education and colleagues (2014)