

**BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY**

**The Role of Support from Significant Adults in the  
Relationship Between  
Bullying Victimization and Well-being:  
Comparative Analysis Between School Children  
with Physical Disabilities and School Children Without**

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## Abstract

### Scientific Background:

Adolescents with disabilities experience greater levels of peer victimization and psychosocial distress than non-disabled youth. However, since the area of the disabilities research currently goes through the conceptual transformation there are certain methodological challenges in the interpretation of empirical data.

Adolescents' well-being, in-school bullying victimization and social support of parents, teachers and peers are intertwined in direct and indirect relations. These relationships have been extensively studied among the general adolescent population. But there are research evidences that the nature and strength of these factors' relations among adolescents with physical disabilities differ from previous. The present study examines the role of the parents, teachers and peers support and its influence on the relations between victimization from bullying (and cyberbullying) and well-being among Jewish-Israeli school children with physical disabilities.

### Research Objectives:

The aim of the present study was to examine the relationship between well-being, victimization from bullying and cyberbullying and social support (teachers, parents and peers) among Jewish-Israeli school children with self-reported physical disabilities.

### Method:

The current study implemented a secondary analysis of the data from the 2018 Health Behaviors in School-aged Children (HBSC-WHO) Israeli survey among school children. The survey is conducted every four years and is part of a multinational Health Behavior of School-Aged Children (HBSC) survey led by the World Health Organization (WHO). All study participants are required to use a uniform methodological protocol which addresses the structure and contents of the questionnaire, sample construction, and sampling method.

### Population:

Data for the current study included 9,464 highschool students (48.9% female) attending 228 public schools across Israel. Although the Israeli HBSC 2019 survey included pupils from all public sectors (Jewish secular schools, Jewish religious schools and Arab public schools), the current study uses only answers of students from the Jewish sector (there is a noteworthy difference in the approaches towards disabled and disabilities in the two cultures).

### Key Findings:

The results of the study indicate that male adolescents and the students of a weak socioeconomic background report physical disability more frequently. This finding raises questions about the nature of self-reporting of physical disability.

Examination of the research hypotheses concerning the relations between well-being, victimization from bullying and cyberbullying and social support (teachers, parents and peers) showed that there is a difference between the assumptions of the initial model and the empirical results. Following the findings, the initial model was updated into two separate models for each study group (students with physical disabilities and without).

Examination of the research hypotheses concerning differences between the study populations showed significant differences in the level of social support, the rate of the victimization from bullying and cyberbullying and the levels of the well-being.

### Main Conclusions:

The study showed that students with physical disabilities have a smaller connection to the accepted social networks as well as are more socially and emotionally vulnerable than typical students.

Theoretically - the study showed the need for further clarification of self-reported physical disability and showed the need for a conceptual adjustment to the definition of disability as an interaction between the characteristics of health, personality and society.

The study emphasizes the importance of teachers' role who, according to the study's findings, are the only significant resilience factor for the students with physical disabilities within the school walls. At the same time the study showed that social support is only a weak factor in terms of maintaining adolescents well-being.