

Article

Teacher Victimization by Students, Their Parents, and School Staff: Prevalence and Links with Teachers' Life Satisfaction in a Lithuanian Sample

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Abstract: The links between different forms of teacher victimization and teachers' life satisfaction are still under-researched. To highlight teacher victimization by various parties within the school environment and its associations with teachers' life satisfaction, the Satisfaction with Life Scale, the Multidimensional Teacher Victimization Scale, and some additional measures were applied. The findings based on a Lithuanian sample (n = 1146) revealed that a significant portion of teachers have experienced victimization in various forms: 38.5% of teachers have been bullied by school staff, 33.9% have faced verbal victimization from students' parents, and victimization by students affected 65.8% of teachers, with verbal and social victimization being the most common. An SEM analysis ($\chi^2 = 355.787$; Df = 33; CFI = 0.928; TLI = 0.902; NFI = 0.922; RMSEA = 0.092 [0.084–0.101]; SRMR = 0.0432) revealed that bullying by staff is not only detrimental in its own right but also relates positively to other forms of victimization, including verbal victimization by parents and multidimensional victimization by students, as teacher victimization by students and their parents mediated the relationship between teacher victimization by school staff and teacher life satisfaction. The findings suggest a complex problem within the school environment where different forms of victimization are interconnected and call for urgent attention and action from educational policymakers and school administrators to address and mitigate teacher victimization.

Keywords: teacher victimization; school climate; teacher-directed aggression; life satisfaction; Lithuania



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1. Introduction

Respect for teachers varies worldwide, with some countries like Japan holding teachers in high regard for their contribution to students' integrity and achievements, which might result in teachers' job satisfaction [1]. However, in many countries, including the United States [2], China [3], and South Korea [4], despite cultural respect for this profession, teachers have experienced incidents of teacher-directed violence [5] or teacher victimization [6,7], encompassing physical, social, verbal, and cyber violence, sexual harassment, and personal property offenses [8].

Teacher-directed violence or teacher victimization is a relatively new research field that has recently received considerable attention, especially when national surveys revealed that in some countries, e.g., the USA, the majority of teachers had experienced some form of victimization at school, including verbal harassment, theft, damage to property, or physical abuse [2]. Many recent studies have reported that teacher victimization is related to adverse outcomes, e.g., lower job satisfaction and reduced school connectedness [7,9], which might eventually affect the school climate [10], student achievements, and teachers'

life satisfaction [11]. However, the links between different forms of teacher victimization by students, their parents and school staff, and teachers' life satisfaction are still under-researched. The purpose of this study was to examine the links between various forms of teacher victimization by students, their parents, and school staff, and teachers' life satisfaction.

1.1. Teacher Victimization

Teacher victimization is a multifaceted phenomenon [12–15] that refers to situations where teachers experience various forms of mistreatment, harassment, or aggression in the workplace, coming from various sources, including students, parents, colleagues, or administrators [3,16–19]. Teachers may be victimized by student misbehavior, including verbal abuse, disrespect, bullying, or physical aggression [3,18]. Teachers may also face conflicts with parents, including confrontations, accusations, or disrespectful behavior, arising from misunderstandings, academic concerns, or disagreements about teaching methods [19,20]. Interactions with colleagues involving bullying, undermining behavior, or conflicts can also contribute to teacher victimization [4,21,22]. Finally, teachers may feel victimized by administrative decisions or actions, and by a lack of communication or appreciation that is perceived as unfair or unsupportive [23]. On the whole, teacher victimization can take the form of workplace bullying, which involves repeated mistreatment, humiliation, or intimidation, coming from colleagues, administrators, students, or their parents, and can have broader psychological effects [12,24,25]. The categorization of teacher victimization encompasses various forms of teacher-directed violence, such as physical, social, verbal, and cyber violence, sexual harassment, and personal property offenses [7,8].

The prevailing socioecological conceptual framework suggests that schools implementing positive, evidence-based strategies and fair discipline policies promote positive interactions between students and teachers [26]. Previous studies have provided significant insights on teacher perceptions of victimization and safety, school hardening strategies to increase physical safety, school programs or policies to enhance school climate, positive discipline policies, as well as teacher–student relationships [23,26].

Previous studies have also revealed that teachers' suffering more forms of violence increases the risk of suffering any future violence [27]. Besides, teachers who reported recent or multiyear victimization had lower connectedness to school and job satisfaction, and more often thought about ending their teaching careers [15,25]. Studies have consistently shown an association between higher levels of bullying and teacher victimization and lower levels of teacher job satisfaction [28]. Additionally, teacher victimization experiences have been correlated with lower self-reported job performance, diminished student trust, a perception of reduced safety at school, and an increased likelihood of contemplating leaving the profession [29,30]. Moreover, school-violence-related stress was found to be negatively associated with teachers' quality of life, acting through mechanisms such as coping self-efficacy and job satisfaction [31].

Numerous studies have revealed that teachers who experience mistreatment at their workplace may suffer from stress, anxiety, depression, burnout [24,32,33], and a decline in overall psychological well-being [34], so the impact of teacher victimization extends beyond the professional realm. Victimized teachers are more likely to suffer from psychological distress, impaired personal relationships, and heightened fear, all of which harm job performance and relationships with students [4,35–37]. Teacher victimization has been consistently linked to adverse effects on emotional and physical well-being, job performance, and retention [11,25,30,35]. Verbal and physical aggression by students have been found to be highly correlated with teachers' emotional distress [36,38–40]. Bullying experiences during teacher training have been associated with adverse outcomes, including compromised job satisfaction and a diminished general health state [41].

Addressing teacher victimization is crucial for creating a positive and supportive educational environment, as teacher-directed violence impacts school climate, and even student academic and behavioral outcomes [9,10,42–46]. Exposure to violence, emotional

exhaustion, and low professional achievement by teachers contribute to poor student performance in school [47,48]. Research has shown that teacher victimization can significantly impact student academic and behavioral outcomes as well as the schooling, recruitment, and retention of highly effective teachers [8,49,50].

Violence against teachers predicts physical and emotional effects, as well as negative outcomes in teaching-related functioning, with women reporting higher levels of physical symptoms compared to men [51]. Serious acts of violence against teachers have been found to affect their performance at school and can lead to absenteeism due to fear and safety concerns [52]. While some studies found no significant differences in stress for teachers who experienced teacher-directed violence compared to those who did not experience it [53,54], other studies revealed that teacher-directed violence significantly impacted teacher well-being, recruitment, and retention [3,16,18,19,55,56]. Self-blame predicted negative affect, which, in turn, predicted the majority of outcomes after experiencing violence against teachers [9,57,58].

The relationship between school- and teacher-level factors, including those related to victimization, and teacher job satisfaction has been consistently established in the literature [59–61]. Teachers who feel supported by the administration and work in environments where rules are consistently enforced are less likely to fall victim to teacher-directed violence [46,62–64]. The lack of support from administrators has been identified as a factor that negatively impacts teachers' feelings, interpersonal challenges, and school systems and policies [2,7,23,44,65,66]. Perceived school support has been identified as having a direct effect on exposure to school violence, subjective well-being, and professional disengagement in teachers [67]. Next, urban schools have reported the highest levels of teacher-directed violence, followed by rural schools and then suburban schools [54]. A significant relationship has been detected between teacher-directed violence and factors such as gender and the education sector [68]. Male gender and urban settings have been associated with a higher likelihood of teacher victimization [69].

Previous studies have suggested a negative impact of teacher victimization on teachers' well-being [25]. Teacher-directed violence has consistently been associated with adverse effects on emotional and physical well-being [53]. Verbal and physical aggression by students have been found to be highly correlated with teachers' emotional distress [36], while perceived teacher stress has been directly associated with emotional and physical violent discipline, mediated by job perceptions [70,71]. Additionally, teachers' sense of disempowerment after experiencing incidents of violence was associated with turnover intentions and decisions [72]. Finally, teaching satisfaction has been found to be positively correlated with self-esteem but negatively correlated with psychological distress and teaching stress, and teachers' well-being was correlated with the belief in a just world [73].

1.2. Teachers' Life Satisfaction

Teacher life satisfaction is affected by a variety of antecedents [35,63,74–76], and understanding these factors is important for creating a positive teaching environment. Research has evidenced several factors contributing to teachers' life satisfaction. Firstly, positive and supportive relationships with colleagues contribute significantly to teacher life satisfaction [53,77]. Adequate support from school administrators, including clear communication, recognition of achievements, and fair policies, is also vital for teacher satisfaction [2]. Adequate and fair financial compensation, along with competitive benefits, plays a role in teacher satisfaction, and policies that support a healthy work–life balance, such as flexible schedules and reasonable working hours, positively impact teacher satisfaction [23].

Additionally, studies have revealed that teachers who have a degree of autonomy in decision-making and classroom management often report higher levels of job satisfaction [23]. Next, manageable workloads that allow for a balance between professional and personal life as well as access to continuous professional development and opportunities for career advancement contribute to higher satisfaction levels [12]. Teachers who feel that their values align with the mission and values of the school are more likely to be satisfied

with their job [78]. Perceived job security and stability can also contribute to satisfaction, reducing stress related to employment concerns [74]. Most importantly, teachers who have positive relationships with their students and colleagues often experience higher job and life satisfaction [76]. Positive student–teacher relationships as well as recognition and appreciation from students, parents, colleagues, and administrators contribute to a more rewarding teaching experience and life satisfaction [77].

The literature underscores the far-reaching consequences of teacher victimization on various facets of teachers' lives [79–82], including life satisfaction. Studies have regularly shown that teacher victimization has a significantly negative effect on job satisfaction [12,17]. Victims of bullying in the teaching profession are more likely to report poor self-rated health and life satisfaction, with compromised relationships with parents, teachers, and peers partially mediating these effects [83]. Teacher victimization experiences, along with the fear of crime, have been found to have a strong direct link to job and employer satisfaction [84]. Additionally, the perception of victimization increases the probability of teachers leaving both the school and the profession [13,15,30].

However, the relationship between victimization and overall life satisfaction is complex, with data showing mixed results [85]. School violence has an indirect effect on life satisfaction through school satisfaction for those who have experienced victimization [86]. Teacher victimization is highly correlated with emotional distress, and factors such as gender, a student-oriented approach, and incident characteristics predict the extent of this distress [36,87]. While teacher victimization is linked to heightened stress associated with teaching, some evidence does not support a specific link between the fear of victimization and teacher stress [88]. On the whole, victimization has a negative relationship with life satisfaction and a positive relationship with emotional difficulties, with hope and school connectedness identified as potential mediators [89]. In some research, teacher victimization has been associated with the stress faced by teachers [50]. High stress levels were positively linked to negative affect, but self-control and organizational social support were identified as factors that can contribute to life satisfaction among teachers [76].

1.3. Present Study

Several decades ago, research evidenced that teacher victimization experiences are negatively associated with job and employer satisfaction [84]. Years later, it was found that victimization impacts multiple domains, but the data on the relationship between victimization and overall life satisfaction were mixed [85]. Some recent research found no significant differences in stress for teachers who experienced teacher-directed violence compared to those who did not experience it [53,54]. However, the majority of findings suggest that teacher victimization could be related to diminished life satisfaction and imply negative links between teacher victimization and satisfaction with life.

Understanding and addressing teachers' life satisfaction, especially teacher victimization by students, their parents, and school staff, can provide insights into preventing a victimization culture at school. This creates a more supportive work environment for teachers, ultimately enhancing their overall life satisfaction and, subsequently, positively impacting students' achievements and well-being.

Educational institutions that implement positive, evidence-based strategies and fair discipline policies promote positive interactions between students and teachers, as suggested by the socioecological framework [26]. However, it could also be assumed that teacher victimization by school staff is related to teacher victimization by students and their parents, and this premise is grounded in the organizational climate theory and social learning theory. Organizational climate theory suggests that workplace victimization can create a hostile environment, fostering negative interactions among individuals within that environment [90–92]. Teachers who experience victimization by school staff may develop a heightened sensitivity to aggressive behaviors, leading them to perceive and react to similar behaviors from students and their parents. Social learning theory posits that individuals learn from observing and imitating others [93], and, in the educational

context, if individuals (students) witness aggressive behaviors, they may be more likely to engage in similar behaviors. Moreover, the school environment functions as a microcosm of society, and patterns of aggression and victimization may permeate various relationships within the school community. Therefore, teacher victimization by school staff could presumably impact the overall interpersonal dynamics within the school, potentially affecting the relationships between teachers and students or their parents. This cross-sectional study intended to contribute by exploring teacher victimization within this specific framework. Furthermore, if teachers experience victimization by school staff, this may create a negative emotional climate that permeates their interactions with students and their parents, and this negative climate, in turn, can contribute to strained relationships, further affecting teacher life satisfaction. Moreover, presumably, victimization can have cascading effects on well-being, as negative experiences in one domain can spill over into other areas of life, influencing overall life satisfaction. So, it is important to shed light on the potential mechanisms through which teacher victimization by school staff could be related to broader aspects of teachers' lives.

Therefore, this study aimed to reveal the role of teacher victimization by school staff, followed by teacher victimization by students and their parents, in teachers' life satisfaction. The following hypotheses were examined:

H1. *Teacher victimization by students and their parents is negatively related to teacher life satisfaction.*

H2. *Teacher victimization by school staff (teachers and administrators) is negatively related to teacher life satisfaction.*

H3. *Teacher victimization by school staff is related to teacher victimization by students and their parents.*

H4. *Teacher victimization by students and their parents mediates the link between teacher victimization by school staff and teacher life satisfaction.*

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. The Sample

This study used a test design utilizing a heterogeneous convenient sample of 1146 individuals working in educational institutions as teachers in various Lithuanian cities: Marijampolė (n = 42), Plungė (n = 31), Vilnius (n = 362), Elektrėnai (n = 8); Mažeikiai district (n = 18); Telšiai (n = 47), Kalvarija (n = 2), Akmenė (n = 9), Klaipėda (n = 86), Kėdainiai (n = 21), Joniškis (n = 29), Kretinga (n = 24), Kaunas (n = 75), Jurbarkas (n = 14), Kazlų Rūda municipality (n = 4), Panevėžys (n = 54), Pasvalys (n = 7), Alytus (n = 22), Šakiai (n = 23), Šiauliai (n = 94), Tauragė (n = 23), Ukmergė (n = 12), Varėna (n = 2), Kupiškis (n = 3), Švenčionys (n = 8), Kelmė (n = 14), Šilutė (n = 16), Visaginas (n = 4), Ignalina (n = 6), Palanga (n = 9), Akmenė (n = 13), Šalčininkai (n = 2), Trakai (n = 10), Jonava (n = 9), Rokiškis (n = 11), Rietavas (n = 9), and Pakruojis (n = 23).

Of those, 1059 participants were females (92.4%), 85 were males (7.4%), and 2 preferred not to disclose their gender. The survey sample reflects the demographics of Lithuanian teachers, based on official statistics (Official Statistics Portal: <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize?hash=2db4b643-8a84-47ea-bde9-ee71f984b661#/>, accessed on 19 January 2024). The mean age of participants was 51 years (SD = 9290, age range from 20 to 72 years old). According to the official education indicators of the Republic of Lithuania (ŠVIS: <https://www.svis.smm.lt/pedagogai/>, accessed on 19 January 2024), the average age of teachers in Lithuania at the time of the survey was 51.16 years. The sociodemographic characteristics of the participants at baseline are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of participants at baseline.

Baseline Characteristic	n	%
Gender		
Female	1059	92.4
Male	85	7.4
Prefer not to answer	2	0.2
Education		
Bachelor's Degree (University)	581	50.7
Master's Degree (University)	451	39.4
Doctoral Degree (University)	3	0.3
Secondary school graduate	14	1.2
High school graduate (College)	94	8.2
Preferred not to answer	3	0.3
Employment years in education		
1–3 years	55	4.8
4–5 years	40	3.5
6–10 years	71	6.2
11–20 years	184	16.1
21–30 years	341	29.8
More than 30 years	455	39.7
Type of school		
Preschool education institution	164	14.3
Primary school	49	4.3
High school (Gymnasium)	388	33.9
Non-formal education institution	50	4.4
Vocational training institution	38	3.3
Pro-gymnasium	441	38.5
Other	16	1.4

Participation in the study was anonymous and voluntary, and the respondents did not receive any compensation. An invitation to participate in the study was sent to the official teacher communities, allowing all Lithuanian teachers to voluntarily participate in the study. The questionnaire's heading introduced the purpose and the need for the study. Victimization was discussed in a few sentences, thus providing teachers with an introduction to the phenomenon of victimization.

This study's data were taken from a more extensive study on Lithuanian teachers' victimization experiences and well-being. The data collection mode was computer-assisted, and it took about 30 min to complete. The survey data show that 1328 teachers completed the questionnaires on the online platform. However, only 1146 questionnaires were completed fully/correctly. Before the data collection, the basic principles of research ethics were discussed, and the research instrument was approved by the Scientific Committee of the Lifelong Learning Laboratory at Mykolas Romeris University on 2 October 2023, under protocol no. MVGLAB-2023-01.

2.2. Instruments

To reveal teacher victimization (TV) by students, their parents, and school staff, and the links with teachers' life satisfaction, this study used several previously validated instruments: the translated Lithuanian version of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) [94] and the translated Lithuanian version of the Multidimensional Teacher Victimization Scale [20]. The original items of both instruments were translated into Lithuanian and back-translated. To assess teacher victimization by students' parents and school staff, we applied some additional questions constructed by the authors of this study.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was applied to assess teachers' life satisfaction. This scale is a 5-item instrument designed to measure global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with one's life [94]. The response pattern follows a 7-point Likert scale ranging

from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). The SWLS has been validated in many previous studies and contexts [94,95].

The Multidimensional Teacher Victimization Scale was used to assess teachers' opinions on the forms of violence they most frequently experience from students in schools [20]. This scale encompasses various forms of violence perpetrated by students (physical, social, verbal, cyber, sexual, and property-related). Each statement follows a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (more than once a week). The Multidimensional Teacher Victimization Scale was initially validated in previous studies [20].

The Verbal Teacher Victimization by Parents Scale was created by the authors of this study, based on the Multidimensional Teacher Victimization Scale's verbal teacher victimization (Verbal TV) by students subscale. The scale consisted of 4 items: "Student's parent(s) laughed at my looks, dress, or other personal characteristics"; "Student's parent(s) made fun of me by calling me names"; "Student's parent(s) threatened me"; "Student's parent(s) swore at me". Each statement followed a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (more than once a week).

To assess teacher verbal victimization by school staff, or bullying by school staff, two questions were applied: "As a teacher, I was bullied by another teacher/teachers"; "As a teacher, I was bullied by the administrative staff". Each statement followed a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (more than once a week).

In the results section, we included Cronbach's α and McDonald's ω values and model fit indices for the confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) of the instruments used in this study.

2.3. Statistical Analysis

SPSS v.26.0, AMOS v.26.0, JASP v.18, and JAMOVI v.2.2.1 software were applied to analyze the data. JASP v.18 software was applied for confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs), JAMOVI was applied for mediation analysis, AMOS was applied for structural equation modeling (SEM) [96], and SPSS was applied for the rest of the analyses [97].

In SEM, model fit was evaluated based on the CFI (comparative fit index), the normed fit index (NFI), the Tucker–Lewis's coefficient (TLI), SRMR (standardized root mean square residual), RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation), and the χ^2 was presented for descriptive purposes [98]. The values higher than 0.90 for CFI and TLI, and values lower than 0.08 for RMSEA and SRMR, are considered indicative of a good fit, and p -values lower than 0.05 are considered to be statistically significant [99,100].

3. Results

In the preliminary analysis, the internal consistency and validity of the instruments used in this study were assessed and the descriptive statistics were calculated. In the main analysis, the hypotheses on the links between the study variables were tested.

3.1. Preliminary Analysis

Initially, several confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) were performed and Cronbach's α and McDonald's ω values were calculated to examine the reliability and validity of the instruments. As can be seen in Table 2, the internal consistency (α and ω) of the instruments is good. Moreover, the results confirmed the validity of the six-factor Multidimensional Teacher Victimization Scale (including physical TV, social TV, verbal TV, cyber TV, sexual harassment, and personal property offenses) [20]. Additionally, the results revealed that a seventh factor could be added to this scale, namely, verbal TV by students' parents.

The data distribution and descriptives of the study variables are presented in Table 3. The results revealed that the data exhibited a departure from normal distribution.

Table 2. Results of the reliability analysis and the model fit indices of the CFAs of the instruments used in the study.

Instruments	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	NFI	RMSEA	SRMR	Cronbach's α	McDonald's ω
Multidimensional Teacher Victimization Scale, 6 factors (physical, social, verbal, cyber, sexual, and property-related)	755.621	237	0.977	0.973	0.967	0.044 [0.040–0.047]	0.065	0.919	0.938
Verbal Teacher Victimization by Parents Scale, one factor	61.897	2	0.984	0.953	0.984	0.162 [0.129–0.198]	0.053	0.813	0.856
Multidimensional Teacher Victimization Scale, 7 factors (physical, social, verbal, cyber, sexual, property-related, and verbal teacher victimization by parents)	921.178	329	0.976	0.973	0.964	0.040 [0.037–0.043]	0.063	0.928	0.941
Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), one factor	219.982	5	0.983	0.966	0.982	0.194 [0.172–0.216]	0.042	0.880	0.882
Bullying by school staff scale								0.724	0.723

Table 3. Data distribution and descriptives of the study variables.

Scales and Subscales	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient of Variation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Shapiro–Wilk	<i>p</i> -Value of Shapiro–Wilk
Physical TV	1.101	0.241	0.219	3.682	18.347	0.478	<0.001
Social TV	1.464	0.735	0.502	2.454	7.222	0.673	<0.001
Verbal TV	1.394	0.609	0.437	2.578	8.688	0.679	<0.001
Cyber TV	1.072	0.269	0.251	6.840	65.743	0.290	<0.001
Sexual harassment	1.173	0.345	0.295	3.684	20.790	0.552	<0.001
Personal property offenses	1.113	0.294	0.264	5.156	43.042	0.429	<0.001
Parental verbal TV	1.208	0.420	0.348	3.257	13.887	0.558	<0.001
Life satisfaction (SWLS)	4.471	1.318	0.295	−0.387	−0.382	0.979	<0.001
Bullying by staff	1.408	0.679	0.482	2.309	6.628	0.653	<0.001

The prevalence of different forms of teacher victimization by students, their parents, and school staff in the Lithuanian sample is presented in Table 4. The results revealed that 38.5 percent of teachers had experienced bullying by school staff (other teachers and colleagues), while slightly fewer teachers, 33.9 percent, experienced verbal victimization by students' parents.

The results revealed that 38.5 percent of teachers had experienced bullying by school staff (other teachers and colleagues), while slightly fewer teachers, 33.9 percent, experienced verbal victimization by students' parents. Overall teacher victimization by students in the Lithuanian sample reached 65.8 percent, with the highest rates of verbal TV (51.0 percent) and social TV (50.8 percent) and the lowest rates of cyber TV (12.8 percent) among other TV forms.

Table 4. The prevalence of different forms of TV in the Lithuanian sample (n = 1146).

Forms of Teacher Victimization	n	%
Overall TV by students	754	65.8
Physical TV	263	22.9
Social TV	582	50.8
Verbal TV	585	51.0
Cyber TV	147	12.8
Sexual harassment	390	34.0
Personal property offenses	265	23.1
Parental verbal TV	388	33.9
Bullying by school staff	441	38.5

3.2. Main Analysis

Firstly, to examine the links between different forms of teacher victimization by students, their parents, school staff, and teachers’ life satisfaction, correlational analysis was performed (Table 5).

Table 5. Spearman’s correlations of the study variables.

Variable	Physical	Social	Verbal	Cyber	Sexual	Property	Parental	Life Satisf.	Bullying
1. Physical	—								
2. Social	0.409 ***	—							
3. Verbal	0.476 ***	0.702 ***	—						
4. Cyber	0.192 ***	0.412 ***	0.390 ***	—					
5. Sexual	0.390 ***	0.562 ***	0.590 ***	0.328 ***	—				
6. Property	0.374 ***	0.429 ***	0.459 ***	0.283 ***	0.412 ***	—			
7. Parental	0.365 ***	0.477 ***	0.466 ***	0.327 ***	0.333 ***	0.366 ***	—		
8. Life satisf.	−0.144 ***	−0.248 ***	−0.252 ***	−0.156 ***	−0.166 ***	−0.169 ***	−0.171 ***	—	
9. Bullying	0.247 ***	0.334 ***	0.293 ***	0.206 ***	0.251 ***	0.219 ***	0.354 ***	−0.207 ***	—
10. Overall TV	0.554 ***	0.879 ***	0.879 ***	0.452 ***	0.703 ***	0.566 ***	0.523 ***	−0.274 ***	0.360 ***

*** $p < 0.001$.

Correlational analysis revealed that life satisfaction was statistically significantly negatively related to verbal TV ($\rho = -0.252, p < 0.001$), social TV ($\rho = -0.248, p < 0.001$), bullying by staff ($\rho = -0.207, p < 0.001$), parental verbal TV ($\rho = -0.171, p < 0.001$), personal property offenses ($\rho = -0.169, p < 0.001$), sexual harassment ($\rho = -0.166, p < 0.001$), cyber TV ($\rho = -0.156, p < 0.001$), and physical TV ($\rho = -0.144, p < 0.001$). Bullying by staff was significantly positively related to parental verbal TV ($\rho = 0.354, p < 0.001$), social TV ($\rho = 0.334, p < 0.001$), verbal TV ($\rho = 0.293, p < 0.001$), sexual harassment ($\rho = 0.251, p < 0.001$), physical TV ($\rho = 0.247, p < 0.001$), personal property offenses ($\rho = 0.219, p < 0.001$), and cyber TV ($\rho = 0.206, p < 0.001$).

To examine the hypotheses and explore various aspects of the relationships among the study variables, we conducted a structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis. Utilizing SEM offers several advantages, as it allows for the assessment of the meaningfulness and significance of the theoretical structural connections between the constructs. In this study, we employed the covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) approach, chosen specifically because our research necessitated a comprehensive measure of goodness-of-fit at a global level.

Standardized results of the model are presented in Figure 1. The findings revealed that the fit of the model was acceptable: $\chi^2 = 355.787$; Df = 33; CFI = 0.928; TLI = 0.902; NFI = 0.922; RMSEA = 0.092 [0.084–0.101]; SRMR = 0.0432.

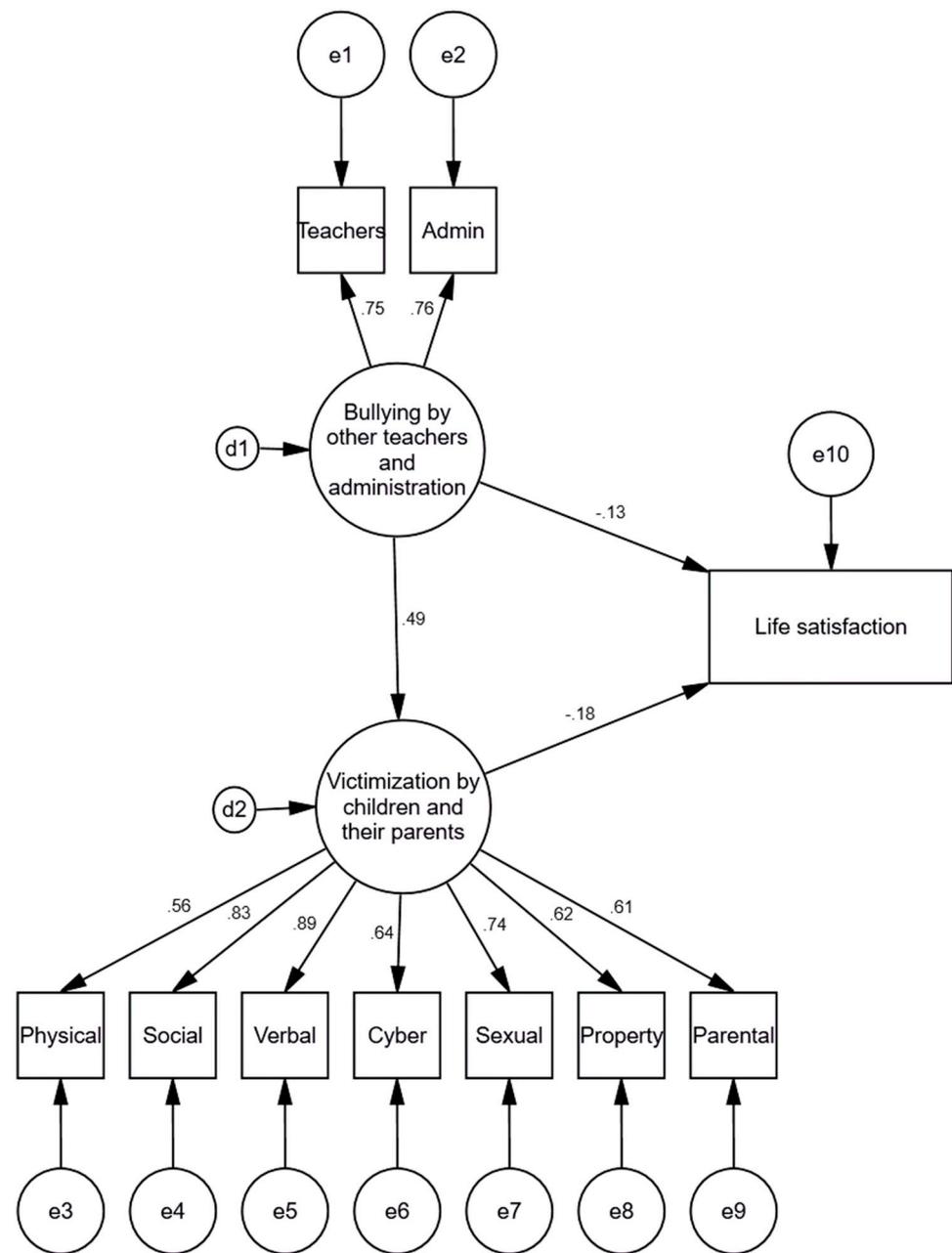


Figure 1. Standardized results of the model of associations between teacher victimization by staff, victimization by children and their parents, and life satisfaction.

The estimates of the model of associations between the study variables (teacher victimization by school staff, victimization by school children and their parents, and life satisfaction) are displayed in Table 6.

The SEM findings suggested that teacher victimization (bullying) by school staff followed by teacher victimization by students and their parents plays a significant role in teacher life satisfaction.

The mediation analysis results indicating the role of overall victimization by students are presented in Table 7.

The indirect, direct, and total effects were significant, even though the R^2 for life satisfaction was just 0.064, and the R^2 for overall victimization by students was 0.155.

Table 6. Scalar estimates of the model of associations between teacher victimization (bullying) by staff, victimization by children and their parents, and life satisfaction.

Regression			B	S.E.	C.R.	p	β
Bullying by staff	→	Victimization by children and parents	0.238	0.021	11.216	<0.001	0.493
Bullying by staff	→	Bullying by other teachers	1.000				0.751
Bullying by staff	→	Bullying by administration	1.172	0.088	13.368	<0.001	0.762
Victimization by children and parents	→	Parental verbal TV	1.000				0.613
Victimization by children and parents	→	Property offenses	0.712	0.040	17.788	<0.001	0.623
Victimization by children and parents	→	Sexual harassment	0.999	0.049	20.328	<0.001	0.745
Victimization by children and parents	→	Cyber TV	0.672	0.037	18.240	<0.001	0.644
Victimization by children and parents	→	Verbal TV	20.100	0.092	22.746	<0.001	0.888
Victimization by children and parents	→	Social TV	20.358	0.108	21.808	<0.001	0.826
Victimization by children and parents	→	Physical TV	0.521	0.032	16.236	<0.001	0.556
Bullying by staff	→	Life satisfaction	−0.328	0.101	−3.236	<0.001	−0.133
Victimization by children and parents	→	Life satisfaction	−0.914	0.192	−4.756	<0.001	−0.179

Table 7. The mediation analysis results: the role of teacher victimization (TV) by students.

Effect	Label	Estimate	SE	Z	p	% Mediation
Indirect	a × b	−0.138	0.0256	−5.40	<0.001	37.5
Direct	c	−0.230	0.0604	−3.81	<0.001	62.5
Total	c + a × b	−0.368	0.0563	−6.53	<0.001	100.0
Path estimates						
Bullying by staff → Overall TV by students	a	0.194	0.0134	14.49	<0.001	
Overall TV by students → Life satisfaction	b	−0.713	0.1227	−5.82	<0.001	
Bullying by staff → Life satisfaction	c	−0.230	0.0604	−3.81	<0.001	

To summarize, H1, which assumed that teacher victimization by students and their parents is negatively related to teacher life satisfaction, was confirmed. The results also confirmed H2, which presumed that teacher victimization by school staff (teachers and administrators) is negatively related to teacher life satisfaction, and H3, which stated that teacher victimization by school staff is related to teacher victimization by students and their parents. Next, the findings confirmed H4, which assumed that teacher victimization by students and their parents mediates the link between teacher victimization by school staff and teacher life satisfaction.

4. Discussion

This study focused on a significant yet often overlooked aspect of the educational environment: teacher victimization. Although conducted within a Lithuanian context, it offers some significant insights into the importance of addressing teacher victimization. The purpose of this study was to examine the links between various forms of teacher victimization—by students, their parents, and school staff—and teachers’ life satisfaction, as well as to reveal the prevalence of teacher victimization in Lithuania.

Previous surveys have revealed that the prevalence of violence against teachers varies in different countries [30,51,56,101]. This study revealed that the prevalence rates of various forms of victimization faced by teachers, including bullying by school staff, verbal victimization by students’ parents, and different types of victimization by students in

the Lithuanian sample are alarmingly high, with over a third of teachers experiencing bullying by colleagues and verbal victimization by students' parents and nearly two-thirds by students. Although the rates of teacher victimization in Lithuania are relatively lower than demonstrated by previous research in other countries (e.g., [2,27]), still the rate of around 40% could be considered worryingly high because of its potential negative effects on teacher well-being, school climate, teaching quality, and overall educational outcomes, as it signals a need for intervention, support, and a combined effort to foster a positive and respectful work environment within educational institutions. The findings of this study align with the literature that recognizes the multifaceted nature of workplace victimization, which can stem from multiple sources, including colleagues, superiors, and even external sources like parents [12,14–17,49,88,102,103].

Thus, a substantial proportion of teachers in Lithuania have experienced different forms of victimization, with the highest being verbal victimization and the lowest being cyber victimization. Next, this study demonstrated that various forms of teacher victimization were significantly negatively related to life satisfaction, which also aligns with previous research [11,12,31,74]. Specifically, negative correlations were found with bullying by school staff and parental verbal victimization, as well as victimization by students: verbal and social victimization, personal property offenses, sexual harassment, and cyber and physical victimization. A clear and significant negative correlation between different forms of teacher victimization and life satisfaction suggests that experiences of victimization, whether verbal, social, physical, or cyber, could adversely affect the well-being of teachers, which was also indirectly indicated by other studies [38–40,104,105]. The stronger the victimization, particularly in forms like bullying by staff and verbal victimization, the greater the possible negative impact on life satisfaction. Still, it is important to note that this study was cross-sectional and suggests only the links between teacher victimization and well-being, but the nature of these associations could be multifaceted and reciprocal, indicating alternative explanations for the findings.

As there was a significant negative correlation between different forms of teacher victimization (such as verbal, social, bullying by staff, etc.) and life satisfaction, the findings support the assumption that teacher victimization could negatively affect their life satisfaction. However, the cross-sectional design of this study limits making definitive causal claims and indicates that this assumption, to some extent evidenced in previous research [10,34,73,106], requires validation through stronger, longitudinal designs.

Furthermore, this study's finding of a negative correlation between various forms of teacher victimization and life satisfaction is consistent with the broader literature on occupational stress. Research has long established that workplace bullying and victimization have detrimental effects on an individual's psychological well-being [103,107,108]. This underscores the necessity for interventions focusing on the mental health and well-being of teachers.

Additionally, the findings of this study revealed that teacher victimization or bullying by school staff (other teachers and administrators) was significantly positively related to verbal victimization by parents and various forms of victimization by students: social victimization, verbal victimization, sexual harassment, physical victimization, personal property offenses, and cyber victimization. These findings suggest a complex interplay between different victimization experiences within the school environment, as evidenced by previous research [40,104,109–122].

The SEM analysis, which is valuable as it allows for the examination of complex interrelationships between variables [100], provided a more nuanced understanding of the relationships between different types of victimization and life satisfaction. The findings suggested that teacher victimization by school staff, followed by victimization by students and their parents, plays a significant role in teachers' life satisfaction. Hypothesis 1, which posited that teacher victimization by students and their parents is negatively related to teacher life satisfaction, was confirmed. The results also supported Hypothesis 2, which assumed that teacher victimization by school staff is negatively related to life satisfaction,

and Hypothesis 3, which stated that teacher victimization by school staff is related to teacher victimization by students and their parents. Finally, the findings confirmed Hypothesis 4, which suggested that teacher victimization by students and their parents mediates the link between teacher victimization by school staff and teacher life satisfaction. The findings suggest a possible cascading effect where victimization by school staff is related to victimization by students and parents, further deteriorating life satisfaction. This could imply that a hostile or negative environment enabled by staff may be a contributing factor or a marker of a broader culture of victimization that also involves students and parents. These implications align with the previous studies on victimization culture [83,121,123]. However, the cross-sectional design of this study implies that the findings should be regarded with caution and need further validation.

One of the critical findings from the SEM analysis is the mediating role of victimization by students and parents. This suggests that the impact of staff victimization on a teacher's life satisfaction could be not just directly, but also indirectly influenced by the additional victimization experienced by students and parents. In other words, teachers who are victimized by colleagues are more likely to experience victimization from students and parents, which could further damage their life satisfaction. These findings underscore the importance of non-violent communication [124] and policies in educational environments, starting from school–staff interactions to create a supportive and compassionate school climate for the flourishing of teachers and students [10,44,45,111,113,121]. Thus, this study highlights the need for effective interventions and policies to prevent teacher victimization, which could include professional development for teachers and administrators on identifying and addressing bullying, creating supportive networks within schools, and fostering a school culture that values respect, compassion, and inclusivity, as outlined in previous research [113,125].

Therefore, this study revealed a complex network of relationships where teacher victimization in various forms is significantly and negatively associated with life satisfaction and provided a comprehensive picture of how different forms of victimization collectively relate to teachers' life satisfaction. The findings emphasize the importance of addressing teacher victimization in its various forms as a key factor in improving the quality of the work environment and the overall well-being of teachers [13–16,49,88,126].

Moreover, the findings of this study also contribute to the academic discourse on teacher victimization, which is a critical issue in educational research, as teacher victimization can have far-reaching consequences, not only affecting the psychological well-being of the teachers but also impacting the educational environment and student outcomes [18,28,45,62,64,127].

In the broader context of educational research, these findings align with the existing literature that emphasizes the importance of a safe and supportive work environment for teachers [2,63,77,113,125]. Previous studies have shown that teachers' well-being is crucial for effective teaching and positive student outcomes, and teacher victimization can lead to increased stress, burnout, and even attrition from the profession [24,32,33,41,74]. The findings from this study underscore the importance of addressing teacher victimization as a critical factor in ensuring a healthy and productive educational environment and call for a comprehensive approach that includes awareness, prevention, support, and intervention strategies to safeguard teachers' well-being and, by extension, enhance the quality of education [19,24,34,52,55,61,76,80,115].

Overall, the findings of this study indicate a need for comprehensive educational policies and practice strategies to address teacher victimization, including professional development for staff, support systems for teachers, and interventions that foster a positive school culture [8,23,63,110,112].

Limitations and Future Directions

The results of this study provide some valuable insights into the relationship between various forms of teacher victimization—by students, their parents, and school

staff—and teachers' life satisfaction, but there are several limitations. Firstly, this study lacks a stronger theoretical and methodological background. Using validated scales to assess multidimensional teacher victimization by students' parents or school staff, and controlling for additional variables (e.g., gender) that might confound the relationships, would provide more valuable insights into the links between different forms of TV and teacher life satisfaction.

The next significant limitation of this study was that this research hypothesized links between the study variables, although causality or directionality based on the methodology of the survey cannot be specified. This study identified several significant relationships, but it is crucial to investigate the causality and directionality of these relationships. Longitudinal studies or experimental designs could help uncover causal links, and the generalizations based on the findings of this study should be made with caution. Moreover, longitudinal studies could provide insights into the long-term impacts of teacher victimization on life satisfaction.

Furthermore, further research can explore potential antecedents of multidimensional teacher victimization by students, their parents, and school staff, such as cultural factors, personality traits, or adverse childhood experiences, as well as potential consequences of TV, such as burnout or post-traumatic stress, as attempted in previous research [24].

In addition, although these findings contribute to the global understanding of teacher victimization, they are specific to a Lithuanian sample, and caution should be exercised when generalizing the results to other cultural or educational contexts, as the unique cultural and institutional factors in Lithuania may affect the dynamics of teacher victimization differently than in other regions. Thus, it is important to consider cultural and contextual factors in interpreting these results. Comparative studies across different cultural contexts could help in understanding the universal versus context-specific elements of the phenomenon of teacher victimization by students, their parents, and school staff. Cross-cultural studies in educational settings could highlight how educational systems and cultural norms are related to the manifestation of teacher victimization.

Finally, presumably, only those teachers for whom the experience of victimization was not so pronounced or painful were willing to participate in the study. In contrast, teachers who were more sensitive to the phenomenon may have been inclined to refuse to take part in the study, so the results might not accurately reflect the real situation and may not be representative. Moreover, participants might underreport or overreport certain experiences due to social desirability or other factors, and future research could benefit from additional data sources, such as observer ratings or administrative records, to enhance the robustness of the findings.

In conclusion, although this study contributes to the understanding of teacher victimization and its association with teacher life satisfaction, it underscores the need for systemic approaches to address multidimensional teacher victimization and highlights the importance of future research to promote teacher well-being and the overall climate of educational institutions.

5. Conclusions

This study highlights a critical issue in the educational sector in Lithuania—the widespread victimization of teachers by various parties within the school environment and its significant negative associations with teachers' life satisfaction.

A significant portion of teachers in Lithuania experience victimization in various forms. The findings demonstrated that 38.5% of teachers have been bullied by school staff, and a slightly lower percentage (33.9%) have faced verbal victimization from students' parents. The most prevalent form of victimization is by students, affecting 65.8% of teachers, with verbal and social victimization being the most common.

The findings revealed a clear and significant negative correlation between different forms of teacher victimization and life satisfaction. The stronger the victimization, partic-

ularly in forms like bullying by staff and verbal victimization by students, the lower the teachers' life satisfaction.

This study indicates that bullying by staff is not only detrimental in its own right but also relates positively to other forms of victimization, such as verbal victimization by parents and multidimensional victimization by students. This interrelation suggests a complex and pervasive problem within the school environment where different forms of victimization are interconnected.

This study confirmed that teacher victimization, especially by school staff, followed by victimization by students and their parents, significantly relates to teachers' life satisfaction. Moreover, teacher victimization by students and their parents mediates the relationship between teacher victimization by school staff and teacher life satisfaction. This implies that the negative impact of staff victimization on life satisfaction can be exacerbated by additional victimization from students and parents.

These findings call for urgent attention and action from educational policymakers and school administrators to address and mitigate teacher victimization, thereby improving the overall well-being of educators.

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