



BSc in Psychology

The role of sexual abuse, social support and positive perspective towards school on adolescents' psychological well-being

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Foreword

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the BSc Psychology degree, Reykjavik University, this thesis is presented in the style of an article for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

Abstract-English

The aim of the present study was to investigate the effect of sexual abuse and protective factors on adolescents' psychological well-being and whether the effect differed between genders. The protective factors were in the form of social support from parents and friends, as well as having a positive perspective towards school. The present study uses data from the national survey, *Youth in Iceland 2016*, conducted by the Icelandic Centre for Social Research and Analysis (ICSRA). A random sample of 2039 secondary school students, was used. The results were determined using multiple regression. The results indicate that sexually abused adolescents experienced lower psychological well-being, all other variables held constant. The protective factors were connected with better psychological well-being of adolescents. However, parental support was related to higher psychological well-being for sexually abused than non-sexually abused adolescents, and positive perspective towards school was related to higher psychological well-being among non-sexually abused adolescents. Finally, the relationship between positive perspective towards school and psychological well-being was stronger for girls, than for boys. These findings indicate the importance of social support and having a positive perspective towards school on adolescents' psychological well-being in general, and that parental support is important for sexually abused adolescents' psychological well-being.

Keywords: sexual abuse, psychological well-being, parental support, friend support, positive perspective towards school, adolescents

Abstract-Icelandic

Markmið rannsóknarinnar var að kanna tengsl kynferðisofbeldis og verndandi þátta á andlega vellíðan unglinga og hvort tengslin væru mismunandi eftir kynjum. Verndandi þættirnir voru í formi stuðnings frá foreldrum og vinum, auk þess að hafa jákvætt viðhorf til skóla. Í þessari rannsókn voru notuð gögn frá Rannsóknunum og greiningu úr könnun þeirra, *Ungt fólk á Íslandi 2016*. Valin voru af handahófi svör 2039 grunnskólanema. Niðurstöður voru skoðaðar með margvíðri aðhvarfsgreiningu. Helstu niðurstöður rannsóknarinnar leiddu í ljós að unglingar sem höfðu orðið fyrir kynferðisofbeldi upplifðu minni andlega vellíðan, gefið að áhrifum hinna frumbreytanna var haldið föstum. Tengsl voru á milli verndandi þáttanna og betri andlegrar vellíðan. Foreldrastuðningur hafði sterkari tengsl við andlega vellíðan þeirra unglinga sem höfðu orðið fyrir kynferðisofbeldi, en jákvætt viðhorf til skóla hafði sterkari tengsl við andlega vellíðan þeirra unglinga sem höfðu ekki orðið fyrir kynferðisofbeldi. Þar að auki var sambandið milli þess að hafa jákvætt viðhorf til skóla og andlegrar vellíðan, sterkara fyrir stelpur en stráka. Þessar niðurstöður benda til þess að það að fá stuðning frá foreldrum og vinum, auk þess að hafa jákvætt viðhorf til skóla, sé mikilvægt fyrir andlega vellíðan unglinga. Einnig að foreldrastuðningur sé mikilvægur fyrir andlega vellíðan unglinga sem hafa orðið fyrir kynferðisofbeldi.

Lykilhugtök: kynferðisofbeldi, andleg vellíðan, foreldrastuðningur, vinastuðningur, jákvætt viðhorf til skóla, unglingar

The role of sexual abuse, social support and positive perspective towards school on
adolescents' psychological well-being

The human experience encompasses many different aspects related to well-being. One aspect of well-being, and the focus of this paper, is called psychological well-being, which has by some defined as a collection of an individual's psychological attributes that are involved in positive human activities (Ryff, 1989a). An individual that experiences high psychological well-being can be described as independent, can face tasks and challenges at different stages of life, feels in charge of own environment, considers oneself to be expanding and growing over time, has self-confidence and a positive attitude towards the self. He or she has a trusting and kind relationship with others, can show empathy and intimacy and accepts the past, both positive and negative experiences (Ruini et al., 2003; Ryff, 1989a; Sagone & Caroli, 2014). Other factors like self-esteem have also been related to psychological well-being (Kling, Ryff, & Essex, 1997) and absence of negative effects, like depressive symptoms or anxiety, have been examined when measuring psychological well-being (Greenleaf, Petrie, & Martin, 2014; Siddique & D'Arcy, 1984). Psychological well-being has also been termed as a feature of mental health (Ryff & Singer, 1996; Sasikala & Cecil, 2016). Psychological well-being is important for individuals' mental and psychical health and can increase resilience when dealing with stressful life events (Dong, Chen, Chang, & Simon, 2013; Fava & Tomba, 2009; Ryff, 2014).

During a transition period like adolescence, individuals experience numerous changes, both internal, e.g. cognitive and psychical changes, and external, e.g. changes in social environment (Dumont & Provost, 1999; Sebastian, Burnett, & Blakemore, 2008). These changes and daily hassles, e.g. losing things and homework, can affect adolescents' well-being (Dumont & Provost, 1999), but a traumatic experience, like childhood sexual abuse, can have a great effect on victims' health and well-being (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986; Felitti et

al., 1998; Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2009; Pereda, Guilera, Forns, & Gómez-Benito, 2009).

The effects of sexual abuse

Child abuse is a great problem around the world and can be presented in many forms; one form is sexual abuse (Ermertcan & Ertan, 2010; Sink, Hyman, Matheny, Georgopoulos, & Kleinman, 2011). Sexual abuse can be defined as; (1) Sexual activity with a child, referring to involving a child in activities for sexual stimulation, and (2) abusive conditions that exist when the offender is significantly older or more mentally developed than the child; is a caretaker of the child or in a place of authority; or if the sexual actions are carried through against the child with coercion or trickery (Finkelhor, 1994). It is also important to realize that the perpetrator can also be a peer of the victim (Finkelhor, Shattuck, Turner, & Hamby, 2014). Sexual abuse can have a serious impact on victims' psychological well-being (Schönbucher, Maier, Mohler-kuo, Schnyder, & Landolt, 2014), as sexual abuse has been linked to depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), bulimia nervosa and poor self-esteem among other negative psychological symptoms (Friedman et al., 2011; Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finkelhor, 1993). It has been demonstrated that sexually abused adolescents are more likely to experience negative psychological symptoms than nonabused adolescents and adolescents that report different type of stressful life event (Bal, Crombez, Van Oost, & De Bourdeaudhuij, 2003; Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finkelhor, 1993). However, certain factors have been demonstrated to have positive effect on adolescents' psychological well-being.

Protective factors: Social support and perspective towards school among adolescents

Social support is a protective factor to cope with stress in general (Cohen, Sherrod, & Clark, 1986). The support can come from parents and friends, and can be in form of helping individuals with daily tasks; give guidance and advice, or express care, empathy and display

trust (Cohen, 2004). Studies have shown that adolescents that receive support from parents or friends experience less psychological distress than adolescents with low support (Holahan, Valentiner, & Moos, 1995; McFarlane, Bellissimo, & Norman, 1995) and have better self-esteem (Boudreault-Bouchard et al., 2013; Walker & Greene, 1986). Both parental and friend support have been demonstrated to have positive effect on adolescents' psychological well-being in general (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Greenberg, Siegel, & Leitch, 1983; Sasikala & Cecil, 2016; Shyamala, McGee, & Stanton, 1992). Studies have established that parental support can lower levels of negative psychological symptoms among sexually abused children and can have good effect on their psychological well-being (Godbout, Briere, Sabourin, & Lussier, 2014; Gries et al., 2000; Rosenthal, Feiring, & Taska, 2003; Schönbucher, Maier, Mohler-kuo, Schnyder, & Landolt, 2014). According to sexually abused adolescents, support from friends can be helpful for coping with the trauma (Schönbucher, Maier, Mohler-kuo, Schnyder, & Landolt, 2014). However, few studies have evaluated if friend support can predict a better outcome on psychological well-being for adolescents that have suffered sexual abuse (Rosenthal, Feiring, & Taska, 2003; Schönbucher et al., 2014).

Perspective towards school, e.g. the quality of interactions between student and teacher, school environment and academic learning (Kuperminc, Leadbeater, Emmons, & Blatt, 1997) has been shown to be associated with adolescents emotional life, academic adjustment and well-being (Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 1998; Roeser & Eccles, 1998). Positive perspective towards school has been linked to students' psychological well-being in general (Way and Robinson, 2003). Positive perspective towards school has been demonstrated as a protective factor against hopelessness and suicidal ideation among sexually abused adolescents (Pharris, Resnick, & Blum, 1997), however studies about the role of positive perspective towards school, on sexually abuse adolescents' psychological well-being, are needed. Those three protective factors, social support from parents or friends and positive

perspective towards school seems generally to have a good effect on adolescents' psychological well-being and it is likely that these factors are important when coping with sexual abuse. This will be tested in the present study.

Gender differences in social support and perspective towards school

Females score higher in certain aspects of psychological well-being compared to males. It seems that females in general have better psychological strength when looking towards the positive end of the range of mental health e.g. they have better self-acceptance and experience more personal growth (Rathi & Rastogi, 2007; Ryff & Singer, 1996). Studies on social relations, from childhood and through teenage years have demonstrated that the relationship between adolescents and their friends changes. Girls often develop more intensive contact with fewer people during the teenage years, while boys have wider networks and the relationships are more superficial (Berndt, 1982; Hunter & Youniss, 1982; Helsen, Vollebergh, & Meeus, 2000). Girls have more trustful relationships with their friends, and better communication than boys (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Berndt, 1982; Hunter & Youniss, 1982). The importance of parental support also seems to weaken more for boys than for girls during adolescence (Helsen et al., 2000). When it comes to perspective towards school and gender differences, girls have a more positive perspective towards their school environment than boys in general (Way, Reddy and Rhodes, 2007).

Girls are more likely to experience negative psychological symptoms after being victims of sexual abuse than sexually abused boys (Bergen, Martin, Richardson, Allison, & Roeger, 2003; Walker, Carey, Mohr, Stein, & Seedat, 2004) and are also more active to seek social support in stressful situations than boys (Cross & Madson, 1997). However, the relations between social support and perspective towards school on sexually abused adolescents' psychological well-being has not been studied independently between genders.

The aim of the present study

The aim of the present study is to investigate the effect of sexual abuse and protective factors on adolescents' psychological well-being and whether the effect differed between genders. The protective factors are in form of parental support, friend support and having a positive perspective towards school. Variables that have been demonstrated to have relations with psychological well-being were controlled for in the present study, including family structure, parental education and age (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001; Ryff & Singer, 1996). Based on previous studies it was hypothesized that: 1) Sexual abuse is related to lower psychological well-being among adolescents; 2) Parental support, friend support and having a positive perspective towards school is positively related to adolescents' psychological well-being; 3) The relations between the protective factors and psychological well-being differs between adolescents that have suffered sexual abuse and non-sexually abused adolescents, the relationship is stronger for sexually abused adolescents; 4) The relations between protective factors and psychological well-being differs between genders in general, the relationship is stronger for girls; 5) The relations between being victim of sexual abuse and psychological well-being differs between genders, being victim of sexual abuse is related to lower psychological well-being among girls than among boys.

Method

Participants

The present study uses data from a cross-sectional national survey, *Youth in Iceland 2016*, conducted by the Icelandic Centre for Social Research and Analysis (ICSRA) (Gudmundsdottir et al., 2016). A total of 10.687 students in 8th, 9th and 10th grade, attending all secondary schools in Iceland, participated in the survey. The overall response rate was 86.0%. In present study a research sample of 2039 respondents, was randomly chosen. These were 980 boys (48.5 %) and 1041 girls (51.5 %) but 18 participants did not reveal their gender. The age range was from 13 to 16 years old and was measured as grade level ($M =$

2.01, $SD = .82$). The participants were not paid a fee for their participation in the study.

Because participants were under the age of 18, a letter of authorization was sent to participants' parents. If parents would not allow their children to take part in the survey, they were asked to contact ISCRA (Appendix A).

Measures

The questionnaire from ICSRA contained 88 questions on 31 pages. The questionnaire covers a wide range of subjects with the aim to evaluate students' general well-being. The questions were formed by professionals in the field of social science, making it safe to assume that the results are reliable and valid (Gudmundsdottir et al., 2016). In the present study, questions focusing on psychological well-being, parental and friends support, perspective towards school, questions about sexual abuse, and gender were used, among variables about participants' background (Appendix B). The dependent variable in present study was psychological well-being. The independent variables were gender, parental support, friend support, perspective towards school and sexual abuse.

Background variables. Variables that referred to participants' background and were controlled for in present study were age, measured as grade level (1 = "8th grade", 2 = "9th grade", 3 = "10th grade"), family structure (0 = "living in other family arrangements", 1 = "living with both biological parents") and mother's and father's education which was combined into one variable (1 = "finished elementary school or less", 2 = "started a school on the secondary level", 3 = "finished secondary level", 4 = "started university level", 5 = "has a university degree").

Psychological well-being. Seven items from the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (SWEMWBS) were used to measure psychological well-being. Mental well-being is a construct that has been accepted to cover psychological functioning (Ryff, 1989b), and The Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale has been demonstrated to

cover measure of psychological well-being (Stewart-Brown et al., 2009). The SWEMWBS is validated and has been established to be good and reliable measurement of mental well-being (Gudmundsdottir & Gudmundsdottir, 2010; Tennant et al., 2007). In present study, exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation, demonstrated that all the variables under psychological well-being ranked on one factor. The seven items were positively worded and were measured with the question “rate your emotions and thoughts from different experiences the past two weeks” (Appendix B). The items focused on e.g. positive attitude towards the future, experienced feelings in the past two weeks, and how relations with other people had been the past two weeks, among other things related to psychological well-being. The responses were measured on five point scale that ranged from 0 to 4, higher score indicating better psychological well-being. These seven items were combined into one continuous scale. Cronbach’s Alpha (α) showed .89, indicating high internal reliability.

Parental support. Five items were used to measure the question “How easy is it to get following from your parents”. The support was assessed by following items: “loving and kindness”, “conversations about personal issues”, “advises about education”, “advises about other matters”, and “help with other projects” (Appendix B). The responses were measured on a four point scale, and ranged from 0 to 3, higher scores represented better support from parents. These five items concerning to parental support, were combined into one continuous scale. The scale had high reliability, $\alpha = .87$.

Friend support. Five items were used to measure the question “How easy is it to get following from your friends”. The following items were: “loving and kindness”, “conversations about personal issues”, “advises about education”, “advises about other matters”, and “help with other projects” (Appendix B). The responses were measured on four point scale that ranged from 0 to 3, higher scores represented better support from friends. These five items related to friend support, were combined into one continuous scale. The

scale had high reliability, $\alpha = .88$.

Perspective towards school. This measure consisted of thirteen items from the question “How well do you think the following statements apply to you”. Among these thirteen items were following: “I think education is pointless”, “I think education is boring”, “I do not come prepared to classes”, “I do not feel good at my school”, and “I want to quit school”. Ten statements were negatively worded and three positively (Appendix B). The three positively items were reversed to match the negative worded items. The thirteen items were then combined into one continuous scale. The responses were measured on five point scale that ranged from 0 to 4, higher scores represented better perspective towards school. The scale had high reliability, $\alpha = .82$.

Sexual abuse. The variable was measured by two items from the question “Have any of the following happened to you”. The two items were following: “Have you suffered sexual abuse/violence by adults”, and “Have you suffered sexual abuse/violence by peers or older teenager”. The response format was “Yes, in the last 12 months”, “Yes, in the last 30 days”, “Yes, more than 12 months ago”, and “No” (Appendix B). The questions were coded 1 = yes if someone had experienced any sexual abuse and, 0 = no sexual abuse experienced.

Gender. The response format for the question “Are you a boy or a girl” was on nominal scale (Appendix B). Participants’ gender was coded with 1 for boys and 2 for girls.

Procedure

The questionnaire from ICSRA was sent to every 8th, 9th and 10th grade student, in all secondary schools in Iceland. The survey was conducted in February 2016 (Gudmundsdottir et al., 2016). Students that were present in class during the time when the survey was presented, participated. Teachers administered the survey and assisted students if they had any questions about the questionnaire. The participants were respectfully requested to be as honest as possible when filling out the questionnaire, but were also informed that they were not

obliged to participate and could drop from the survey at any time. Participants were asked not to write their name, social security number or any other identifier on the questionnaire, so it would not be possible to track the answers to them and to guarantee anonymity. When participants were finished answering the questions, they were asked to put the questionnaire in an unmarked envelope. The envelope was then returned to the teacher.

Data analysis

In the present study the data was analysed by using multiple linear regression to examine main effects and interaction effects. Before multiple regression was executed, some questions were recoded and other variables were computed. Statistical analysis in present study was based on analysis in a study by Asgeirsdottir, Gudjonsson, Sigurdsson, and Sigfusdottir (2010), but in that particular study, six blockwise models were made and the dependent variables were two, anger and depressed mood. In present study, four blockwise entry models were made for the dependent variable psychological well-being. Model 1 contained the background variables that were controlled for and the independent variable, gender. In Model 2, the independent variable “sexual abuse” was included. The protective factors, parental support, friend support and positive perspective towards school were added to Model 3. Finally the interaction terms (e.g. sexual abuse \times gender) were added to Model 4. Assumptions of multiple linear regression were tested for these models. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was significant ($p < .001$) indicating non-normally disturbed residuals (Figure 1). Other assumptions were met.

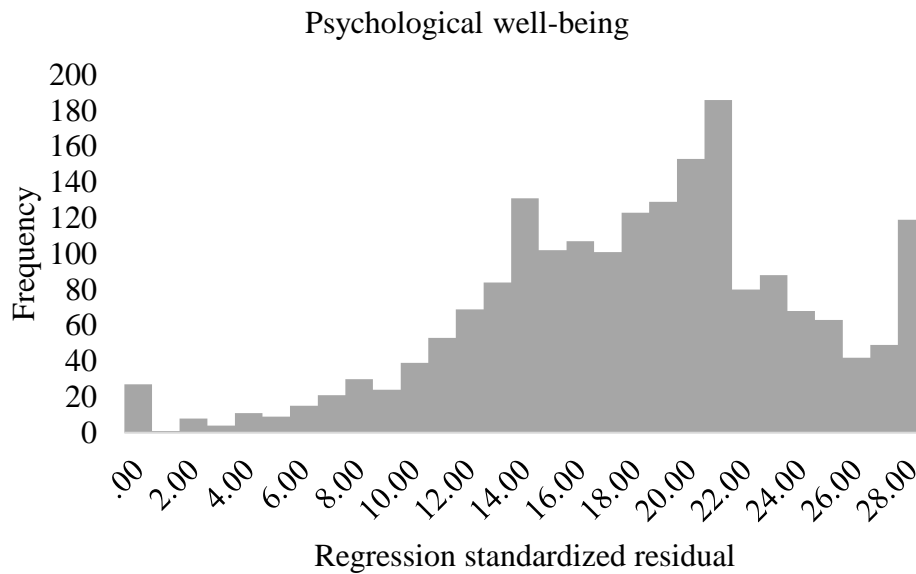


Figure 1. Histogram of non-normally distributed residuals.

Statistical analysis of data was based on the alpha-factor of .05 which gives 95% confidence. The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) was used in analysis of data.

Results

The descriptive statistics (i.e. population size, range, mean and standard deviation) for all study variables are shown in Table 1. The response rate was high for all variables but lowest for “parental education”. The range for psychological well-being was from 0 to 28, with mean of 18.00 ($SD = 5.95$), higher scores indicated better well-being. Participants reported to have good parental support ($M = 12.59$, $SD = 2.90$), good friend support ($M = 10.90$, $SD = 3.43$) and rather a positive perspective towards school ($M = 37.35$, $SD = 7.75$). Sexual abuse ranged from 0 to 1 and the mean value was .05 ($SD = .21$).

Table 1.

Descriptive statistics for all study variables

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	SD
Well-being	1936	0	28	18.00	5.95
Parental support	1988	0	15	12.59	2.90
Friend support	1949	0	15	10.90	3.43
School perspective	1907	5	52	37.35	7.75
Sexual abuse	2039	0	1	.05	.21
Parental education	1364	2	10	7.78	2.47
Family structure	2022	0	1	.68	.47
Grade	2014	1	3	2.01	.82
Gender	2021	1	2	1.51	.50

The correlation matrix in Table 2 indicates that psychological well-being was related to all the variables used in present study. Psychological well-being was positively related to parental support ($r = .45, p < .001$), friend support ($r = .35, p < .001$) and school perspective ($r = .50, p < .001$). The variable sexual abuse was also related to all variables used in the present study. Sexually abuse is negatively related to psychological well-being ($r = -.19, p < .001$), parental support ($r = -.25, p < .001$), friend support ($r = -.06, p < .001$) and school perspective ($r = -.28, p < .001$). The highest correlation was between well-being and perspective towards school ($r = .50, p < .001$) and the lowest correlation was between age and friend support ($r = .01, p = .723$).

Table 2.

Pearson r bivariate correlations between all study variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Well-being	1.000								
2. Gender	-.103**	1.000							
3. Age	-.057*	.013	1.000						
4. Education of parents	.146**	.015	-.082**	1.000					
5. Family structure	.146**	.031	-.016	.080**	1.000				
6. Parental support	.445**	.014	-.055*	.210**	.191**	1.000			
7. Friends support	.347**	.185**	.008	.098**	.133**	.384**	1.000		
8. School perspective	.495**	.043	-.062**	.184**	.139**	.441**	.319**	1.000	
9. Sexual abuse	-.193**	.162**	.062**	-.079**	-.083**	-.251**	-.056**	-.227**	1.000

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed).** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

A multiple regression was calculated to test whether the independent variables predicted the effects on the outcome variable, psychological well-being. Four models are presented in Table 3. Results from model 1 in the hierarchical (blockwise entry) regression, demonstrates that all of the independent variables had significant main effects on psychological well-being. The independent variables in model 1 explained around 4% of variation of participants' psychological well-being ($R^2 = .04$). The model was statistically significant, $F(4, 1212) = 13.26$, $p < .001$. Results from model 2 indicate that sexual abuse is connected to lower psychological well-being ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .001$), all other variables held

constant. Independent variables in model 2 explained about 6% of variation of the dependent variable ($R^2 = .06$). The model was statistically significant, $F(5, 1211) = 15.66, p < .001$. In model 3 the results show that the protective factors were related to higher psychological well-being. Parental support had significant main effect on psychological well-being ($\beta = .17, p < .001$). The main effect of friend support was significant on psychological well-being ($\beta = .20, p < .001$). Finally, perspective towards school had significant main effect on psychological well-being ($\beta = .34, p < .001$). When the protective factors were included in the model, the main effect between sexual abuse and psychological well-being disappeared. The independent variables in model 3 explained 33% of variation of participants' psychological well-being ($R^2 = .33$). The model was significant, $F(8, 1208) = 73.33, p < .001$.

Table 3.

Multiple regression, predicting psychological well-being

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	β	β	β	β
Age	-.05*	-.05	-.015	-.01
Gender	-.12**	-.09*	-.17**	-.66**
Family structure	.10**	.09*	.01	.02
Education of parents	.12**	.11**	.01	.01
Sexual abuse		-.14**	-.01	.30
Parental support			.17**	.20*
Friend support			.20**	.21*
Positive school perspective			.34**	.01
Sexual abuse \times friend support				-.05
Sexual abuse \times parental support				.17
Sexual abuse \times positive school perspective				-.22*
Sexual abuse \times gender				-.18
Gender \times parental support				-.08
Gender \times friend support				-.00
Gender \times positive school perspective				.69**
R^2 (%)	4	6	33	33

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed).** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

In model 4 in Table 3, the interaction terms were contained within the models and there were three significant interactions. First, parental support was a stronger predictor of psychological well-being for participants that had suffered sexual abuse. These findings were almost significant ($\beta = .17, p = .06$). Second, positive perspective towards school and sexual abuse interacted in their effects on psychological well-being ($\beta = -.22, p = .032$), indicating that the relationship between having a positive perspective towards school and psychological well-being was stronger for non-sexually abused participants than for sexually abused participants. Third, gender interacted with positive perspective towards school ($\beta = .69, p < .001$), demonstrating a stronger relationship between positive perspective towards school and psychological well-being for girls than for boys. The variables in model 4 clarified 33% of variation of participants' psychological well-being ($R^2 = .33$). The model was statistically significant, $F(15, 1201) = 41.47, p < .001$. Parental support is an important protective factor for psychological well-being among sexually abused adolescents and having a positive perspective towards school is more strongly related to psychological well-being among non-sexually abused participants. Having a positive perspective towards school is related to higher psychological well-being among girls than boys.

Discussion

The present study was designed to investigate the effect of sexual abuse, parental support, friend support and positive perspective towards school on adolescents' psychological well-being. The focus was to examine whether these protective factors were connected with better psychological well-being among Icelandic adolescents that had suffered sexual abuse and on adolescents in general. Another aim was to investigate whether the effects of sexual abuse, parental and friend support and having a positive perspective towards school on psychological well-being differed between genders.

The findings of the present study support the first hypothesis, that sexual abuse is related to lower psychological well-being among adolescents. Previous studies have indicated that sexually abused adolescents are more likely to experience negative psychological symptoms than non-sexually abused adolescents and adolescents that report different types of stressful life events (Bal et al., 2003; Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finkelhor, 1993). These psychological symptoms can have negative effects on mental health, but psychological well-being has also been termed as mental health (Friedman et al., 2011; Kendall-Tackett et al., 1993; Sasikala & Cecil, 2016). However studies on the relationship between psychological well-being when measuring only individuals' positive functioning (Ryff, 1989a), and sexual abuse among adolescents' are needed.

The results of present study supported the second hypothesis, that parental support, friend support and having a positive perspective towards school are connected with better psychological well-being of adolescents. These findings are in accordance with previous studies that demonstrated that both parental and friend support have a positive effect on adolescents' psychological well-being (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Greenberg, Siegel, & Leitch, 1983; Sasikala & Cecil, 2016; Shyamala et al., 1992), and having a positive perspective towards school is linked to students' psychological well-being (Way and Robinson, 2003).

The third hypothesis of the present study examined the relations between the protective factors and psychological well-being among adolescents, and whether the relationship was stronger for sexually abused adolescents. The results of the present study demonstrated that the relationship between parental support and psychological well-being was stronger for sexually abused adolescents than for non-sexually abused adolescents. These findings can be related with results from previous studies showing that parental support can lower levels of negative psychological symptoms among sexually abused children and can

have good effect on their psychological well-being (Godbout et al., 2014; Gries et al., 2000; Rosenthal, Feiring, & Taska, 2003; Schönbucher et al., 2014). The findings in present study also showed that the relationship between having a positive perspective towards school and psychological well-being was stronger for non-sexually abused adolescents than for sexually abused adolescents. From previous study, positive perspective towards school has been linked to students' psychological well-being in general (Way and Robinson, 2003). However further studies concerning these findings from present study are needed. According to these results, the third hypothesis was partly supported.

The fourth hypothesis in present study stated that the relations between parental support, friend support, positive perspective towards school and psychological well-being differed between genders in general, indicating that the relationship was stronger for girls. The findings demonstrated that the relationship between positive perspective towards school and psychological well-being was stronger for girls than for boys. This is in line with previous studies that indicate that girls have a more positive perspective towards their school environment than boys in general (Way et al., 2007) and having a positive perspective towards school can have effects on students' psychological well-being and decreases the likelihood of emotional distress (Roeser & Eccles, 1998; Way and Robinson, 2003). The part of the hypothesis concerning that the relations between parental support, friend support and adolescents psychological well-being differed between gender in general, was not significantly supported in present study. The fourth hypothesis was therefore partly supported.

The fifth hypothesis was that the relations between being a victim of sexual abuse and psychological well-being differed between genders, being victim of sexual abuse is related to lower psychological well-being among girls than among boys. The results from present study demonstrated insignificant interaction effect, indicating that being a victim of sexual abuse was not related to lower psychological well-being among girls than among boys. These results

are not consistent with previous studies that established that girls are more likely to experience negative psychological symptoms after being victims of sexual abuse than sexually abused boys (Bergen et al., 2003; Walker, Carey, Mohr, Stein, & Seedat, 2004), but measuring absence of negative symptoms is one way to measure psychological well-being (Greenleaf et al., 2014; Siddique & D'Arcy, 1984). The fifth and final hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Some limitation of present study are worth noting. First, the assumption of normality of residuals, was broken because the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was significant. Second, cross-sectional data were used for analyses, and it is therefore impossible to conclude about causal relationships. Third, the measures in present study were self-report from participants, which can lead to bias and raises the question about inaccuracy when answering the questions. Fourth, limitation in present study is the clarification on the term “psychological well-being” between studies. It has been demonstrated that constructs like autonomy, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, positive relations with others and self-acceptance have been considered the key factors that define psychological well-being (Ruini et al., 2003; Ryff, 1989a). However some studies have used self-esteem, depressive symptoms or anxiety when measuring psychological well-being (Kling et al., 1997; Massé et al., 1998; Siddique & D'Arcy, 1984). This demonstrates that the term “psychological well-being” is a complex construct that is hard to exactly pin down and how it is measured and defined is flexible and differs between researchers.

The greatest strength of the present study was the large sample size of 2039 participants, randomly selected. The response rate in total was 86% for students in 8th, 9th and 10th grade in all secondary schools in Iceland which makes the outcome greatly representative for this age group of Icelandic adolescents. Anonymity of the responders is a great strength and it is more likely that participants answer truthfully in questions about sensitive matters.

Finally, all the participants in present study sample size, answered the question about whether they had been a victim of sexual abuse or not.

In conclusion, the present findings established that it is important for adolescents in general to receive parental support, friend support and to have a positive perspective towards school when it comes to their psychological well-being. Support from parents is important for sexually abused adolescents and increases psychological well-being more for that group than for non-sexually abused adolescents that receive parental support according to results from the present study. This indicates the importance to encourage sexually abused adolescents to seek support from parents and to inform parents about showing empathy and understanding. The present results also indicate that the relationship between having a positive perspective towards school and psychological well-being is stronger for girls than for boys in general. Based on a study by Way et al., 2007, girls reported having more positive perspective towards school e.g. concerning support from teachers, than boys did. It is therefore important to update teachers and other school administrators, about the benefit that their support can have on students' psychological well-being and remind them to be prepared and open to giving their students adequate support. Boys should also be encouraged to seek support from teachers.

Interesting further studies could be to examine the relationship between psychological well-being, when only individuals' positive functioning is considered in measures of the term (Ryff, 1989a), among sexually abused children and even in adults. Previous studies have established that girls have more trustful relationship with their friends in general, and better communication than boys (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Berndt, 1982; Hunter & Youniss, 1982) and that importance of parental support seems to weaken more for boys than for girls during adolescence (Helsen et al., 2000). Therefore it could be interesting for further studies

to split sexually abused adolescents into two groups between genders, and examine more closely the effect that social support has on psychological well-being among boys.

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Appendix A

Consent letter to parents

RANNSÓKNIR & GREINING



Háskólanum í Reykjavík

Ungt fólk 2016

Rannsókn meðal nemenda í 8. – 10. bekk á Íslandi.

Ágætu foreldrar / forráðamenn,

Dagana 2. til 4. febrúar næstkomandi er fyrirhugað að gera könnun á högum og líðan ungmenna í 8. til 10. bekk grunnskóla á Íslandi. Könnun þessi er unnin skv. samningi við mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið og er hluti rannsóknaráætlunar ársins 2016.

Nemendur í 8. – 10. bekk svara fjölbreyttum spurningum sem hafa það markmið að kanna sérstaklega hagi þeirra og líðan. Könnunin tekur um 50 – 60 mínútur.

Ungt fólk rannsóknaröðin hefur verið unnin á Íslandi allt frá árinu 1992 en samfella í rannsóknum á högum og líðan ungs fólks er þeim sem að málaflokknum starfa afar mikilvæg. Upplýsingar úr rannsóknunum hafa allt frá upphafi verið notaðar við stefnumótun og aðgerðir í málefnum ungs fólks og eru grunnur að vinnu fjölmargra stofnana samfélagsins, sem vinna að því að bæta líf og hagi ungs fólks á Íslandi.

Megináherslur rannsókna *Ungt fólk* eru þær sömu í ár og áður hefur verið og lúta að því að kanna hagi og líðan ungmennanna og félagslega þætti. Hér má m.a. nefna tengsl við foreldra og vini, íþróttir og tómstundir, félagslíf, líðan, einelti, streitu, mataræði, nám, brottfallsáhættu, félagslega stöðu, svefnvenjur, lestur, tölvunotkun, vímuefnaneyslu, framtíðaráform og annað mikilvægt.

Könnunin er nafnlaus og því ekki hægt að rekja neinar upplýsingar til einstaklinga og eru nemendur sérstaklega beðnir að rita hvorki nafn sitt né kennitölu á spurningalistann. Þegar nemendur hafa lokið við að fylla út spurningalistana eru þeir beðnir að setja þá í trúnaðarumslög og loka þeim vandlega áður en þeim er safnað saman. Listarnir eru svo sendir greiningaraðilum sem tölvuskrá upplýsingarnar án þess að geta með nokkru móti vitað hverjum þær tilheyra. Öll gögn rannsóknarinnar eru ópersónurekjanleg. Að skráningu lokinni er spurningalistunum eytt.

Með þessu bréfi biðjum við ykkur, kærar foreldrar/forráðamenn, að samþykkja að barn ykkar taki þátt í könnuninni. Berist okkur ekki athugasemd við beiðni þessari gerum við ráð fyrir að slíkt samþykki sé til staðar. Verði þátttaka góð koma upplýsingarnar til með að skila mikilsverðum niðurstöðum, bæði hagnýtum og fræðilegum líkt og fyrri kannanir af þessu tagi hafa gert.

Ef nánari upplýsinga er óskað þá vinsamlega hafið samband við Jón Sigfússon hjá Rannsóknum & greiningu með tölvupósti rannsoknir@rannsoknir.is eða í síma 599 6431.

Með vinsemd og virðingu
Starfsfólk Rannsókna & greiningar

Appendix B

Questionnaire

1. Ert þú strákur eða stelpa?

☐ Strákur ☐ Stelpa

3. Í hvaða bekk ert þú? (Merktu aðeins í EINN reit)

☐ 8. bekk ☐ 9. bekk ☐ 10. bekk

4. Hverjir eftirtalinna búa heima hjá þér? (Merktu aðeins í EINN reit)

- ☐ Ég bý hjá báðum foreldrum
- ☐ Ég bý nokkurn veginn jafnt til skiptis hjá föður og móður
- ☐ Ég bý aðallega hjá móður en ekki föður
- ☐ Ég bý aðallega hjá föður en ekki móður
- ☐ Ég bý hjá móður og sambýlismanni/konu hennar
- ☐ Ég bý hjá föður og sambýliskonu/manni hans
- ☐ Ég bý á eigin vegum
- ☐ Ég bý við annað fyrirkomulag

5. Hver er menntun foreldra þinna? Ef þú ert að mestu alin/n upp hjá fósturmóður eða fósturföður þá svarar þú fyrir hana/hann. (Merktu í EINN reit fyrir móður og EINN reit fyrir föður.).

	Faðir	Móðir
Lauk grunnskólaprófi eða minna	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hóf framhaldsskólanám í menntaskóla eða iðnskóla	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lauk framhaldsskóla í menntaskóla eða iðnskóla	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hóf háskólanám	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lauk háskólanámi	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Veit ekki, eða á ekki við	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. Hversu vel finnst þér eftirfarandi staðhæfingar eiga við um þig? (Merktu í EINN reit í hverjum lið)

	Á nær alltaf við um mig	Á oft við um mig	Á stundum við um mig	Á sjaldan við um mig	Á nær aldrei við um mig
a) Mér finnst námið tilgangslaust	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Mér leiðist námið	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Mér finnst ég hafa góðan vinnu- frið í kennslustundum til að sinna náminu	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Mér finnst ég fá alla þá aðstoð við námið sem ég þarfnast frá kennurum mínum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Mér finnst ég illa búin(n) undir kennslustundir	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Mér finnst ég ekki leggja nægjanlega rækt við námið	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Mér finnst námið vera of létt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Mér finnst námið vera of þungt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Mér líður illa í skólanum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) Mig langar til að hætta í skólanum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k) Mig langar til að skipta um skóla	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l) Mér semur illa við kennarana	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m) Mér finnst námið mikilvægt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

19. Hversu auðvelt eða erfitt væri fyrir þig að fá eftirtalið hjá foreldrum þínum?

(Merktu í EINN reit í hverjum lið)

	Mjög erfitt	Frekar erfitt	Frekar auðvelt	Mjög auðvelt
a) Umhyggju og hlýju	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Samræður um persónuleg málefni	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Ráðleggingar varðandi námið	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Ráðleggingar varðandi önnur verk (viðfangsefni) þín	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Aðstoð við ýmis verk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20. Hversu auðvelt eða erfitt væri fyrir þig að fá eftirtalið hjá vinum þínum?

(Merktu í EINN reit í hverjum lið)

	Mjög erfitt	Frekar erfitt	Frekar auðvelt	Mjög auðvelt
a) Umhyggju og hlýju	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Samræður um persónuleg málefni	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Ráðleggingar varðandi námið	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Ráðleggingar varðandi önnur verk (viðfangsefni) þín	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Aðstoð við ýmis verk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

28. Hefur eitthvað af eftirfarandi komið fyrir þig? (Merktu í EINN reit eða FLEIRI eftir því sem við á)

	Já, á síðustu 30 dögum	Já, á síðustu 12 mánuðum	Já, fyrir meira en 12 mánuðum	Nei
r) Þú orðið fyrir kynferðislegri misnotkun/ofbeldi af hálfu fullorðins einstaklings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
s) Þú orðið fyrir kynferðislegri misnotkun/ofbeldi af hálfu jafnaldra þíns eða eldri unglings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

36. Næst eru staðhæfingar um hugsanir og tilfinningar. Vinsamlegast merktu í þann reit sem lýsir best reynslu þinni síðastliðnar 2 vikur. Merktu í einn reit í hverjum lið.

	Aldrei	Sjaldan	Stundum	Oft	Alltaf
a) Ég hef litið bjartsýnum augum til framtíðarinnar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Mér hefur þótt ég gera gagn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Ég hef verið afslöppuð/afslappaður	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Mér hefur gengið vel að takast á við vandamál	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Ég hef hugsað skýrt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Mér hefur fundist ég náin(n) öðrum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Ég hef átt auðvelt með að gera upp hug minn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>