

KiVa™ Antibullying Program

Background

Bullying is a common problem in schools worldwide. It is usually defined as repeated aggressive behaviour against a victim who cannot readily defend him- or herself (Olweus, 1999). The prevalence of bullied children varies considerably across countries (from 5% in Sweden to over 30% in Lithuania), being on average 11% across the 35 countries involved in WHO's Health Behavior in School-aged Children survey (Craig & Harel, 2004). Bullies represent another 11% of school-aged children.

The need for effective anti-bullying interventions is motivated first of all by the multitude of psychosocial problems documented among victimized children and youth. For a number of victims, their experiences continue to affect their lives later on in adulthood. From the perspective of crime prevention, some bullying taking place among peers at schools clearly fulfills the criteria of crime (violent attacks, threats, insulting material spread in the Internet, etc.), children doing the bullying have a higher likelihood than others to end up as antisocial and criminal young adults (e.g., Olweus, 1987). Furthermore, the tragic school shootings, although rare, have been shown to be preceded by prolonged victimization by peers (Leary et al., 2003).

As in many other societies, bullying has been a big concern in Finland for several decades. For many years there was a persistent belief that the problem can be tackled by legislative changes (i.e., putting schools under the obligation of developing their own action plans against bullying), or by a commitment of school personnel to intervene immediately whenever they see bullying taking place ('zero tolerance'). Based on what is known today, reducing bullying requires systematic, ongoing efforts at the level of individual children, classrooms, and the whole school. Moreover, school personnel need concrete tools for bullying prevention work with children and youth, just as they need clear guidelines to intervention when bullying is detected.

In 2006, the Finnish Ministry of Education made a three-year contract with the University of Turku concerning the development and initial evaluation of an anti-bullying program for schools giving comprehensive education (the basic nine-year education from grades 1 to 9 in the Finnish school system). From the very beginning, the vision was to

develop a program that would be suitable for nationwide diffusion across the country. The contract was renewed after the first years to include program diffusion in Finnish schools. The program has been developed in collaboration between the Department of Psychology and Centre for Learning Research in the University of Turku. The project was co-led by professor Christina Salmivalli and PhD, special researcher Elisa Poskiparta. People from several disciplines have been working in the project: psychology, education, sociology, and statistics.

What is KiVa Antibullying Program

The social architecture of bullying

The KiVa antibullying program is predicated on the idea that how peer bystanders, who are neither bullies nor victims, react when witnessing bullying is crucial for either maintaining bullying or putting an end to it (e.g., Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Kaukiainen, & Österman, 1996; Salmivalli, 2010). Influencing the peer context is thus essential in effective antibullying work.

Universal and indicated actions

The KiVa program consists of universal and indicated actions. The core of the universal actions consists of student lessons (primary school) and theme days (secondary school) involving discussion, video films, as well as learning-by-doing exercises done in dyads and in small groups. The lessons form a continuum lasting for the whole comprehensive education, with key issues taken up repeatedly in Grades 1, 4 and 7 in age-appropriate ways. The topics cover a variety of issues related to group interaction and group pressure, the mechanisms and consequences of bullying, and especially, what the students can do together in order to counteract bullying and support their victimized peers. Virtual learning environments (anti-bullying computer games for primary school students, an Internet forum “KiVa Street” for secondary school students) are an integral part of universal actions. Their contents are closely connected to the topics of the student lessons and themes, enhancing the learning process and motivating students to apply the learnt skills in everyday interactions with peers. In addition, the universal actions include a parents’ guide as well as symbols (posters, highly visible vests for teachers supervising recess time) reminding both students and school personnel of KiVa. Above all, the goal of the lessons is to prevent bullying. This kind of work in class is likely to affect the on-going bullying processes. During the lessons/themes bullying is discussed on a general level and acute cases are not tackled.

Indicated actions are used once a case of bullying has come to attention of the school staff. Indicated actions refer to an adult intervention in an emergent case of bullying by addressing the student involved in bullying as well as helping and supporting the victimized student. Cases of bullying are tackled by members of the school KiVa team together with the classroom teachers. The KiVa team members carry out individual and group discussions with the bullies and the victimized child whereas the classroom teacher meets several of the victim's classmates and challenges them to think about how they could support their bullied classmate.

KiVa has several features that, when taken together, differentiate it from other anti-bullying programs. First, KiVa includes a broad and encompassing array of concrete and professional materials for students, teachers, and parents. Rather than offering merely "guiding principles" to school personnel, it provides them with a whole pack of activities to be carried out with students. Second, KiVa harnesses the powerful learning media provided by the Internet and virtual learning environments. Third, KiVa goes beyond "emphasizing the role of bystanders", mentioned in the context of several intervention programs, by actually providing ways to enhance empathy towards victimized peers and self-efficacy to support them.

The KiVa program is effective in reducing bullying

Piloting

The KiVa program was first evaluated with a stringent randomized controlled trial (RCT) involving 234 schools (117 intervention, 117 control) from all five provinces in the mainland Finland. The findings from the evaluation studies were promising: the first phase of evaluation involving Grades 4-6 (Kärnä, Voeten, Little, Poskiparta, Kaljonen, & Salmivalli, 2011), showed that KiVa reduced bullying and being bullied significantly. The program also resulted in reductions in negative bystander behaviours (reinforcing the bully), as well as increases in empathy towards victimized peers and self-efficacy to support and defend them.

The second phase of the evaluation involving also younger (Grades 1-3) and older (Grades 7-9) students indicated, however, that the effectiveness of the program varied considerably across grade levels (Kärnä, Voeten, Little, Alanen, Poskiparta, & Salmivalli, in revision). An overall comparison of effects across grades showed that the effects were largest on grade four and smallest in secondary grade levels.

In a further study focusing on different forms of victimization in grades 4-6 (Salmivalli, Kärnä, & Poskiparta, 2011) KiVa was shown to reduce each of the examined nine forms, reductions varying from -20% (being threatened) to -63% (material victimization).

During the randomized controlled trial, we also tested two different approaches to dealing with children who had been involved in bullying others, which we refer to as confronting and nonconfronting approaches (Garandeanu, Poskiparta, & Salmivalli, under review). In the former approach, the bully is openly told that his/her behavior is not tolerated and must cease immediately whereas in the latter, the adults do not blame the bully but rather shares his concern about the victim. In half of the schools involved in the randomized controlled trial as intervention schools, KiVa team members were instructed to use the confronting approach, whereas the other half was using the nonconfronting approach. In 79% of all cases, victims reported that the bullying had stopped completely, and the two methods were overall equally effective at making the bullying stop. There were some moderators of their effectiveness, however: The nonconfronting approach was more successful than the confronting approach in cases of long-term victimization and in primary school. The confronting approach, on the other hand, was more effective in cases involving more than one bully.

In a study by Williford, Boulton, Noland, Kärnä, Little, & Salmivalli (2012), also based on the RCT data, suggested that the KiVa program was effective for reducing students' internalizing symptoms (anxiety and depression) and improving their peer-group perceptions. Finally, changes in anxiety, depression, and positive peer perceptions were found to be predicted by reductions in victimization.

Furthermore, KiVa has been found to increase school liking, academic motivation, and even academic performance among students in KiVa schools, as compared to students from control schools (Salmivalli, Garandeanu, & Veenstra, 2012).

National diffusion

The national release of the KiVa antibullying program started in the fall of 2009, when 1450 schools started to implement it. In 2010 and in 2011 new schools joined in, and at present there are about 2700 schools implementing the program. They represent 90% of all schools providing comprehensive education in Finland.

The evaluation of program effects during the national rollout is based on students' responses to web-based surveys that are part of the KiVa program and according to the recommendation of program developers, done every May. Thus, the first large pre-test survey for schools starting the implementation in fall 2009 took place in May 2009, followed by an annual assessment every May. Already after the first year we were able to estimate program effects utilizing a cohort-longitudinal design with adjacent cohorts (Olweus & Alsaker, 1991). In this design, post-test data from students in each age cohort are compared with baseline data from same-aged students from the same schools (i.e., in the previous cohort), who have not yet been exposed to the intervention

The effects were generally weaker during the broad rollout, as compared with the randomized controlled trial (Kärnä, Voeten, Little, Alanen, Poskiparta, & Salmivalli, 2011). They were statistically significant at the primary school level (Grades 1-6) with respect to bullying others, as well as being bullied. At the secondary, or junior high school level (Grades 7-9), the effects for bullying others were in the right direction but not significant, and the effects for being bullied were just at the border of being significant (except in grade eight, where the reduction of victimization was significant).

It was estimated that during the first year of broad rollout, the KiVa program reduced the number of students bullying others by about 2300 and the number of students being repeatedly bullied by others by 3900. It can be further calculated that had all schools in Finland been implementing KiVa, the reductions would amount to about 7 500 bullies and 12 500 victims during the first one-year period. This concretizes the fact that even rather small effect sizes can make a huge difference in the lives of numerous children and youth.

Challenges in the Implementation of KiVa

Implementation fidelity, referring to the extent to which an intervention program is delivered as planned (Dusenbury, Brannigan, Falco, & Hansen, 2003), is a critical precondition for success of any prevention/intervention program. In the evaluation of KiVa antibullying program we have placed concerted emphasis on the assessment of various aspects of implementation (such as preparation, dose, coverage, and student responsiveness) of the different program components. There is already evidence of a positive association between the level of implementation and reduction in victimization, both from the randomized controlled trial (Haataja, Ahtola, Poskiparta, Voeten, & Salmivalli, 2011) and broad rollout (Kärnä et al., 2012). In other words, teachers and schools who did more also

gained more in terms of reducing victimization. We have learnt by now that although the level of implementing KiVa program was overall high, it tended to decrease already during the first academic year (from fall to spring; Haataja, Voeten, & Salmivalli, 2011) and even more so in the consecutive years. Overall, implementation fidelity was somewhat lower during the broad rollout than during the randomized controlled trial (Salmivalli, Haataja, & Poskiparta, 2011). Whereas primary school teachers delivered on average 8.7 out of ten lessons during the RCT, the corresponding number was 7.8 lessons during the first and 7.2 lessons during the second year of broad implementation. An important future task will be to identify individual and school-level factors enhancing the likelihood of high-quality implementation. For instance, Principal support for antibullying work seems to be a crucial precondition for the successful delivery of student lessons involved in the KiVa antibullying program (Ahtola, Haataja, Kärnä, Poskiparta, & Salmivalli, under review), both at the teacher and at the school level.

In order to prevent a decrease in implementation over time we have taken some new actions to support schools in their efforts. Such actions include newsletters sent to schools four times a year, online training about the KiVa program and its implementation, biannual KiVa conference days, quality recommendations provided to schools, and regular monitoring of implementation. Each school gets annual feedback on their level of implementation, how that changes from one year to another, and how it relates to the implementation efforts of the other KiVa schools. On the basis of the information gathered by both staff and student surveys, the KiVa School of the Year is awarded every year.

Implementing KiVa antibullying program abroad

Funding from the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture has enabled our group at the University of Turku to develop a comprehensive, research-based anti-bullying program which has already helped thousands of children and adolescents in our country. The strong theoretical and empirical base of KiVa led us to believe that it will work in other contexts outside of Finland as well. The program is currently being translated into several languages (English, German, Dutch, French, and Japan) and evaluation studies are beginning in Sweden, the Netherlands, Wales and United States. Although, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture holds the copyrights of the KiVa® program, the University of Turku has access rights, and the rights to distribute licenses to third parties (Governments,

universities, NGOs) who can further utilize KiVa for commercial purposes. Consequently, KiVa antibullying program will be available in other countries as well.

A list of scientific publications of the KiVa -project

Journal article-refereed, Original research

- Kärnä, A., Voeten, M., Poskiparta, E., & Salmivalli, C. (2010). Vulnerable children in varying classroom contexts: Bystanders' behaviors moderate the effects of risk factors on victimization. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, *56*, 261-282.
- Pöyhönen, V., Juvonen, J., & Salmivalli, C. (2010). What does it take to defend the victimized peer? The interplay between personal and social factors. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, *56*, 143-163.
- Salmivalli, C. (2010). Bullying and the peer group: A review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *15*, 112-120.
- Kärnä, A., Voeten, M., Little, T., Poskiparta, E., Kaljonen, A., & Salmivalli, C. (2011). A large-scale evaluation of the KiVa anti-bullying program: Grades 4-6. *Child Development*, *82*, 311-330.
- Strohmeier, D., Kärnä, A., & Salmivalli, C. (2011). Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Risk Factors for Peer Victimization in Immigrant Youth in Finland. *Developmental Psychology*, *47*, 248-258.
- Huitsing, G., Sainio, M., Veenstra, R., & Salmivalli, C. (2011) "It must be me" or "It could be them?" The impact of the social network position of bullies and victims on victims' adjustment. *Social Networks*, doi:10.1016/j.socnet.2010.07.002
- Sainio, M., Veenstra, R., Huitsing, G., & Salmivalli, C. (2011). Victims and their defenders: A dyadic approach. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, *35*, 144-151.
- Salmivalli, C., Voeten, M., & Poskiparta, E. (2011). Bystanders matter: Associations between defending, reinforcing, and the frequency of bullying in classrooms. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, *40*, 668-676.
- Salmivalli, C., Kärnä, A., & Poskiparta, E. (2011) Counteracting bullying in Finland: The KiVa program and its effects on different forms of being bullied. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, *35*, 405-411.
- Williford, A., Boulton, A., Noland, B., Kärnä, A., Little, T., & Salmivalli, C. (2012). Effects of the KiVa anti-bullying program on adolescents' depression, anxiety, and perception of peers. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, *40*, 289-300. Kärnä, A., Voeten, M., Little, T., Alanen, E., Poskiparta, E., & Salmivalli, C. (2011). Going to Scale: A nonrandomized nationwide trial of the KiVa antibullying program

for comprehensive schools. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 79, 796-805. doi: 10.1037/a0025740. (2012 Social Policy Journal Article Award by the Society for Research in Adolescence)

In addition, following articles are in revision or in press

Pöyhönen, V., Juvonen, J., & Salmivalli, C. (in press). Standing Up for a Victim, Siding with the Bully, or Standing by? — Bystander Responses in Bullying Situations. *Social Development*.

Ahtola, A., Haataja, A., Kärnä, A., Poskiparta, E., & Salmivalli, C. (in press). For children only? Effects of the KiVa antibullying program on teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*.

Salmivalli, C. (in press). Evidence-Based Bullying Prevention in Finnish Schools: KiVa Antibullying Program. Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention (German Forum for Crime Prevention).

Salmivalli, C., & Poskiparta, E. (in press). Making Bullying Prevention a Priority in Finnish Schools: KiVa Antibullying Program. *New Directions for Youth Development*.

Sainio, M., Veenstra, R., Huising, G., & Salmivalli, C. (in revision). Same- vs. other-sex bullying: risk and protective factors. *Aggressive Behavior*.

Kärnä, A., Voeten, M., Little, T., Alanen, E., Poskiparta, E., & Salmivalli, C. (in revision). Effectiveness of the KiVa Antibullying Program: Grades 1-3 and 7-9.

Saarento, S., Kärnä, A., Hodges, E., & Salmivalli, C. (in revision). Student-, classroom-, and school-level risk factors for victimization. *Journal of School Psychology*.

Salmivalli, C., & Sainio, M. (in revision). Taking a More Rigorous Look at Electronic Victimization: Correlates, Antecedents, and Consequences. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*.

Ahtola, A., Haataja, A., Kärnä, A., Poskiparta, E., & Salmivalli, C. (in revision). Implementation antibullying lessons in elementary classrooms: Principal support matters. *Elementary School Journal*.

Huising, G., van Duijn, M., Snijders, T., Wang, P., Sainio, M., Salmivalli, C., & Veenstra, R. (in revision). Univariate and Multivariate Models of Positive and Negative Networks: Liking, Disliking, and Bully-Victim Relationships. *Social Networks*.

Veenstra, R., Lindenberg, S., Huising, G., Sainio, M., & Salmivalli, C. (in revision). The important role of teachers in bullying interventions: The KiVa program. *Child Development*.

Salmivalli, C., Poskiparta, E., Ahtola, A., & Haataja, A. (in revision). The Effectiveness and

Diffusion of a National Anti-Bullying Program, KiVa, in Finland. *European Psychologist*.

An, Y., & Salmivalli, C. (in revision). Different Forms of Bullying and Victimization: Bully-victims versus Bullies and Victims

Sainio, M., (in revision). Being Bullied by Same- versus Other-Sex Peers: Does It Matter for the Victims? *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*.

Book section, Chapters in research books

Salmivalli, C., & Willför-Nyman, U. (2007). KiVa: Ett forskningsbaserat antimobbingsprogram. In C. Thors (ed.), *Utstött – en bok om mobbning*. Pedagogiska magasinets skriftserie. Stockholm: Lärarförbundets Förlag, pp. 81-95.

Pöyhönen, V., & Salmivalli, C. (2008). New directions in research and practice addressing bullying: Focus on defending behavior. In D. Pepler & W. Craig (Eds.), *An international perspective on understanding and addressing bullying*. PREVNet publication series, 1, 26-43.

Salmivalli, C., & Peets, K. (2009). Bullies, victims, and bully-victim relationships. In K. Rubin, W. Bukowski, & B. Laursen (Eds.), *Handbook of Peer Interactions, Relationships, and Groups*. Guilford Press, pp. 322-340.

Caravita, S., Pöyhönen, V., & Salmivalli, C. (2009). Prosocial involvement in antisocial situations: defending the victims of bullying. In M. Pörhölä & T. Kinney (Eds.), *Anti- and prosocial communication: Theories, methods, and applications* (pp. 173-182). Peter Lang Publishers.

Salmivalli, C., Kärnä, A., & Poskiparta, E. (2010). From peer putdowns to peer support: A theoretical model and how it translated into a national anti-bullying program. In S. R. Jimerson, S. M. Swearer, & D. L. Espelage (Eds.), *Handbook of Bullying in Schools: An International Perspective* (pp. 441-454). New York: Routledge.

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Salmivalli, C., & Peets, K. (2010). Violencia entre iguales: un fenómeno grupal [Peer-to-peer bullying at school: considering the contexts in which it occurs]. In R. Ortega (Ed.), *“Agresividad injustificada y violencia escolar” [Injustified Aggressiveness and School Violence]*. Alianza publications.

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- Salmivalli, C., & Pöyhönen, V. (2012). Cyberbullying in Finland. In Q. Li, D. Cross, & P. Smith (Eds.), *Cyberbullying in the global playground: Research from international perspectives*.
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- Poskiparta, E., Kaukiainen, A., Pöyhönen, V., & Salmivalli, C. (2012). Anti-bullying computer game as part of the KiVa program: Students' perceptions of the game. In A. Costabile & B. Spears (Eds.), *The impact of technology on relationships in educational settings: International Perspectives* (pp. 158-168). New York: Routledge.
- Salmivalli, C., & Poskiparta, E. (2011). KiVa Anti-Mobbing Programm. In Huber, A.A. (Hrsg.). *Anti-Mobbing-Strategien für die Schule. Praxisratgeber zur erfolgreichen und nachhaltigen Intervention* (s. 41-47). [*Anti-Mobbing-Strategies for school. Practice guidebook for successful and lasting interventions*]. Köln: Carl Link, Wolters Kluwer.