



Original

## School climate policy and its relations with social and emotional competencies, bullying and cyberbullying in secondary education<sup>☆</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Some school policies are designed to promote a positive school climate, but little is known about their effectiveness. This study aims at describing the relation among the quality of school climate policy documents, social and emotional competencies, bullying and cyberbullying in students. This ex-post-facto cross-sectional and descriptive study was conducted using a survey of a representative sample of 2139 adolescents. School climate policy documents varied greatly in the quantity and quality of accomplishment in each criterion. According to the evidence from this study, promoting a positive school climate from the school climate policy document is worthy, as bullying perpetration could be reduced. The findings of this study have implications for school policy and educational reforms.

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### El plan de convivencia y su relación con las competencias socioemocionales, el bullying y el cyberbullying en la educación secundaria

## RESUMEN

Las políticas escolares están diseñadas para promover un clima escolar positivo, pero se sabe poco sobre su efectividad. Este estudio tiene como objetivo describir la relación entre la calidad de los documentos del plan de convivencia, las competencias socioemocionales, el bullying y cyberbullying en los estudiantes. Este estudio ex post facto, transversal y descriptivo, se realiza con una encuesta a una muestra representativa de 2.139 adolescentes. Los documentos del plan de convivencia varían en cantidad y calidad en el cumplimiento en cada criterio. Según las evidencias de este estudio, promover un clima escolar positivo a partir del documento del plan de convivencia es conveniente, ya que la agresión del bullying podría reducirse. Los hallazgos de este estudio tienen implicaciones en la política escolar y las reformas educativas.

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## Palabras clave:

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## Introduction

The success of education both at individual and social levels requires strong and coherent school policy in each school with

its specific context. School policy consists of managing human and material resources, including different structures, contexts, tools, procedures, decisions and roles (Griffith, 2003). On the one hand, school policy influences individuals. On the other hand, individuals influence situations and context in a joint mission of educating children in a collective safe space (Allen et al., 2013). As a part of a general school policy, a school climate policy brings together material and practices integrated into a set of rules and relationships. School climate is defined as a singular culture of a school in a multidirectional relationship among the members of school community (Thapa et al., 2013), including all its members and a set of rules for common wellbeing (Ortega-Ruiz, 2015). A positive school climate can facilitate learning, interpersonal relationships and life

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satisfaction, preventing different expressions of violence, such as bullying (Ortega et al., 2004). This includes knowledge, power positions and political relations; all of them expressed explicitly and implicitly in the school policy (Perryman et al., 2017). School policies are crucial for improving education. In their meta-analyses, McEwan (2015), and Scheerens et al. (2007) described interventions conducted to improve the academic achievement of students, where the improvement of the school policies was a component of effective interventions

#### *The relation between school climate and social and emotional competencies*

Social and emotional competencies can be defined as knowledge, skills, and attitudes applied adequately to understand and manage emotions in making responsible decisions while establishing and maintaining positive relationships in social contexts (CASEL, 2012). Social and emotional competencies can be classified into self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, prosocial relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Zych et al., 2018). Understanding the relation between school policy and social and emotional competencies in students can help develop specific policies to improve the school climate. Promoting social and emotional competencies could be an excellent alternative to exclusion, suspension or other traditional punitive options (Gregory & Fergus, 2017). Schools that invest in promoting social and emotional competencies derive several benefits (Haymovitz et al., 2018; Llorent et al., 2020), including more economic profits (Jones et al., 2015), as well as a reduction in antisocial behaviors, health costs and teacher dissatisfaction (Belfield et al., 2015).

A holistic approach is required to promote social and emotional competencies (Elias et al., 2017). Thus, developing social and emotional competencies must be a collective school task, and the whole school policy might be a useful tool to promote them and to control students' behaviors (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). It is reasonable to suggest that school policies can be useful tools to create a desirable school climate and to foster social and emotional competencies in students. At the same time school policies can be useful to prevent bullying and cyberbullying (Hong et al., 2018; Samara & Smith, 2008).

#### *Positive school climate prevents bullying and cyberbullying*

Bullying is a repetitive, long-term aggressive behavior perpetrated by students on other students who become victims, involving an imbalance of power between perpetrators and victims (Olweus et al., 1999). Cyberbullying is also intentional peer aggression, perpetrated through electronic devices, in and out of school, where victims have difficulties in defending themselves (Smith et al., 2008). Both bullying and cyberbullying are present and prevalent around the world (Sorrentino et al., 2019; Zych et al., 2015), and are related to other antisocial behaviors (Nasaescu et al., 2020).

School policies could have an impact on preventing and eradicating bullying (Hong & Espelage, 2012). In their meta-analysis, Cook et al. (2010) identified negative school climate as a predictor of involvement in bullying, including all the bullying roles such as victims, bullies and bully-victims. A positive school climate in childhood was found to be a protective factor against bullying in adolescence (Zych et al., 2020). Improving school anti-bullying policies was found to be among the effective components of anti-bullying programs (Tofi & Farrington, 2011). According to a recent systematic review (Gaffney et al., 2019) cyberbullying intervention and prevention programs are increasing, but research on this topic is still in its early stages. Many countries include anti-bullying policies in compulsory school settings. However, international research

focused on these legal measures is scarce. Chalmers et al. (2016) reported which main themes should be included in school policies according to school policymakers in Australia, giving specific answers about the effectiveness of the policy. Samara and Smith (2008) found a clear increase in specific whole-school anti-bullying policies from 1996 to 2002 in the United Kingdom. The content analysis of these policies showed that not all of them included clear definitions of bullying and cyberbullying.

In a follow-up study, Smith et al. (2012) found that most of the quality criteria of antibullying policies improved years later. Among the findings of their study, a significant relation was found between a high score in strategies for bullying prevention in school policies and lower self-reported bullying perpetration. Nevertheless, another study conducted by Woods and Wolke (2003) showed no significant relation between direct bullying or victimization and antibullying policies scores in 34 schools. According to different studies a whole-school anti-bullying policy can protect children from bullying and its consequences (Zych et al., 2017), although scientific knowledge is still needed to identify the most effective characteristics of school policies. Given that the presence of minorities in schools is important for both school climate policies and bullying prevention strategies as some studies showed that ethnic-cultural minorities can be vulnerable to bullying and cyberbullying (Hong et al., 2018, 2020, Llorent et al., 2016, Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2018), it is important to take this into account when studying policy documents.

#### *The current study*

In Spain, where the current study was conducted, it is compulsory for every school to elaborate and publish its own school climate policy by law. Specific legal texts (LOE, 2006; LOMCE, 2013) have been enacted to encourage the elaboration of school policy to stimulate a positive school climate called *convivencia* (Ortega-Ruiz & Zych, 2016). School policies promote a positive school climate, as an objective in itself and as a tool to decrease violence among students, especially bullying. According to different educational laws such as LOMCE (2013) and LOE (2006), every Spanish school needs to elaborate a school climate policy document -called *Plan de Convivencia*- that includes some compulsory components shown in Chart 1.

However, teachers, parents and researchers in education do not have information about the real impact of school climate policy documents. The effectiveness of a compulsory school policy to enhance school climate has not been thoroughly studied yet. This research study aims at describing the relation between the quality of school climate policy documents and social and emotional competencies in students. It also aims at describing the relation of bullying and cyberbullying with school climate policy document quality as a contextual factor, and social and emotional competencies as an individual factor. It is hypothesized that the schools with high-quality school climate policy documents have less bullying and cyberbullying among students, who at the same time score higher in social and emotional competencies than the students in the other schools.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

The sample included 2139 students, enrolled in Grades 7–10 in 22 schools randomly selected from the compulsory secondary level of the Spanish school system in Andalusia in 2015. This sample was representative with a reliability level of 95% and a sampling error of 2.11%. Among the participants, 1088 were girls and 1026 were boys (50.9% and 48.0% respectively), and 25 students did not report their gender ( $M_{age} = 13.79$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ , ranging from 11 to 19). Students

**Chart 1**  
Components of the school climate policy document in Andalusia (Spain)

Components of school climate policy	Description
1. School assessment	Analysis of the school climate, describing the involvement of school community members and how the school manages conflicts. Also, this component must register detected conflicts and actions developed in previous cases
2. School climate committee	A group of school representatives that coordinates prevention initiatives and solutions to conflicts
3. School-climate promotion classroom	A specific room for individual treatment of disputes, as well as for the development of actions planning in the counselling department
4. General rules of school climate	Clear rules about general school issues and rules to facilitate positive social relationships in specific contexts
5. Promoting positive school climate	A set of actions to promote dialogue and to enhance social climate and a culture of peace
6. Measures to prevent, detect, mediate and solve possible conflicts	Measures focused on how to prevent, detect, mediate and solve possible conflicts in the school
7. Student representatives and their roles	Students representatives and diverse functions. Also, mediators in conflicts and collaborators of teachers
8. Parent representatives and their roles	Parents representatives and diverse functions. Also, mediators in conflicts among members of school
9. School community training	Different activities to improve the practice in school climate management among the different community members
10. Strategies and procedures to publicize, follow-up and evaluate the school policy planning	Planning to establish strategies, procedures and evaluation in each school climate policy
11. Collaboration with other institutions	Description of collaboration with other institutions to improve the school climate
12. Incidence registries	Schools must collect and register different conflicts and problems on the official platform

were identified as ethnic-cultural majority (1,636, 76.5%) or minority groups. The ethnic-cultural minority was composed of Gypsy ethnicity (101, 4.7%), and immigrants (314, 14.7%), with a total of 415 pupils in the sample, which is roughly representative of the school system of the Andalusian region (Junta de Andalucía, 2017).

### Instruments

The *Social and Emotional Competencies Questionnaire* (SEC-Q; Zych et al., 2018) contains 16 items ( $\Omega = .80$ ,  $\alpha = .80$ ), divided into four factors: *self-awareness* ( $\alpha = .72$ ,  $\Omega = .72$ ,  $CR = .71$ ), *self-management and motivation* ( $\alpha = .65$ ,  $\Omega = .67$ ,  $CR = .67$ ), *social-awareness and prosocial behavior* ( $\alpha = .73$ ,  $\Omega = .74$ ,  $CR = .73$ ), and *responsible decision making* ( $\alpha = .77$ ,  $\Omega = .77$ ,  $CR = .76$ ). An excellent alpha ( $\alpha = .80$ ) and omega ( $\Omega = .82$ ) were found for the scale in the current sample, and a Confirmatory Factor Analysis showed a very good fit to this model ( $S/B \chi^2 = 283.30$ ,  $df = 98$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $NFI = .97$ ,  $NNFI = .97$ ,  $CFI = .98$ ,  $RMSEA = .03$ ,  $90\% CI = .027-.036$ ) with  $AVE = 0.40$ .

The *European Bullying Intervention Project Questionnaire* (Ortega-Ruiz et al., 2016) is a scale with 14 items. There are two factors: *victimization* (7 items) and *perpetration* (7 items). The Likert response scale ranged from 0 = never to 4 = more than once a week and, in this study, it referred to “the past few months”. This questionnaire showed very good Cronbach’s alphas in its validation study and excellent reliability in the current project (*victimization* and *perpetration* scales with  $\alpha = .90$ ,  $\Omega = .90$ ,  $CR = .90$ ). A Confirmatory Factor Analysis also showed an excellent fit of the data in this study to the two-factor structure ( $S/B \chi^2 = 962.01$ ,  $df = 76$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $NFI = .95$ ,  $NNFI = .94$ ,  $CFI = .95$ ,  $RMSEA = .076$ ,  $90\% CI = .072-.081$ ) with  $AVE = .57$ .

The *European Cyberbullying Intervention Project Questionnaire* (Ortega-Ruiz et al., 2016), has 22 items and two factors: *cybervictimization* (11 items) and *cyberperpetration* (11 items). The items are answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = never to 4 = more than once a week, in reference to the past few months. The validation study showed excellent Cronbach’s alphas for both factors (*cybervictimization* .80 and *cyberperpetration* .88; Ortega-Ruiz et al., 2016). The current study also has excellent Cronbach’s alphas and McDonald’s omegas (*cybervictimization*  $\alpha = .94$ ,  $\Omega = .94$ ,  $CR = .93$ , and *cyberperpetration*  $\alpha = .96$ ,  $\Omega = .96$ ,  $CR = .96$ ). A Confirmatory Factor Analysis showed a very good fit of the data to this two-factor

structure ( $S/B \chi^2 = 1426.06$ ,  $df = 208$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $NFI = .97$ ,  $NNFI = .97$ ,  $CFI = .98$ ,  $RMSEA = .054$ ,  $90\% CI = .052-.057$ ) with  $AVE = .62$ .

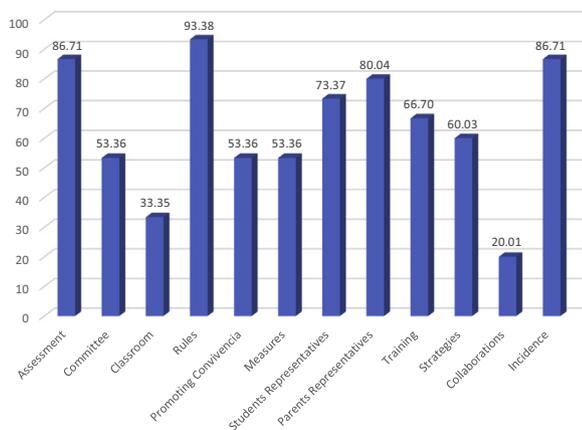
Chart 2 was created to analyse the *school climate policy documents*. Items were established according to the compulsory categories that should be included in each policy document, as defined by the Spanish legislation (LOE, 2006; LOMCE, 2013) and its articulation through the specific regional/Andalusian text (Orden, 2011). This legal text details contents and specific instructions. All components and their contents, in total 23, were analysed, coded and scored, with low as 0 (none or basic/general information) and high as 1 (contextualized and detailed information). This dichotomous coding was decided after a careful examination of policy documents whose quality in each criterion was not variable enough for the use of Likert scales.

### Design and procedure

This ex-post-facto cross-sectional and descriptive study was conducted with a school documents collection and a survey of a representative sample of Andalusian adolescents in 2015. The combination of a qualitative analysis of school climate policy documents and a quantitative analysis of students’ surveys, involved a methodological triangulation of data. After obtaining permissions from the 22 randomly selected schools, researchers visited every school and administered the surveys personally. Students were informed about the details of this research project and that participation was voluntary and anonymous. Only 15 students decided not to participate, or their surveys were excluded because of a response bias (e.g., zigzagging, not reading the questions). During their regular classroom hours, students completed the questionnaires in approximately thirty minutes, supervised by the researchers. The Ethics Committee of the University of Córdoba approved the project. The school climate policy documents were solicited by the researchers during visits for the data collection. Copies were obtained from eleven schools, and another four schools sent documents via email.

### Data analysis

Reliability statistics for the questionnaires were calculated using FACTOR software and Confirmatory Factor Analyses were



**Figure 1.** Percentage of schools with well-developed items of school climate policy documents.

performed with EQS 6.2 software to obtain Cronbach's alphas, McDonald's omegas and check if the factor structure was adequate. School policy documents were scored in 23 items as 0 = none, ambiguous or very general information and 1 = contextualized, precise and detailed information. The dichotomization helped to differentiate clearly the quality of sections included in this document in every school. Scores were summed up and schools were divided into a high or low score in school climate policy documents including each section and the total score based on the median score (low = below the median, high = above the median). Low and high quality schools were compared regarding social and emotional competencies, bullying and cyberbullying using Student's t-tests with SPSS 23. Effect sizes were calculated with Cohen's *d* using the Campbell Collaboration effect size calculator.

Binary logistic regression analyses were performed to discover if School Climate Policy scores, Social and Emotional Competencies, and being a member of ethnic-cultural minority were uniquely

related to bullying and cyberbullying roles. All the variables were dummy coded (0 = no, 1 = yes) or low (0) versus high (1). Students were classified into different bullying and cyberbullying roles based on their responses to items focused on victimization and perpetration. Participants who answered never or once or twice to all the items on perpetration and at least once a month or more to any item on victimization were coded as victims (and vice versa for perpetrators). Bully/victims were students who responded at least once a month or more to any item on both victimization and perpetration. This is a standard way to classify students into bullying and cyberbullying roles used in the field. This was done to discover the impact of the study variables on each role, including pure victims, pure bullies and participants who are involved in both victimization and perpetration, which would not be possible with continuous variables.

In this study, school climate policy documents correspond to each school (not individual children, who are contributing to data about Social and Emotional Competencies, bullying, and cyberbullying). The sample clustering required some specific statistical corrections for clustering in standard errors of the effect sizes (Hedges, 2007). Thus, the variance was increased by  $[1 + (n - 1) \cdot ICC]$ , where  $n$  = number of individuals (average of 97.22) in schools and ICC is the intra-class correlation, equal to 0.025. Thus, all variances of standard errors were multiplied by 3.41 (Farrington et al., 2009; Hedges & Hedberg, 2007; Murray & Blitstein, 2003). Pairwise deletion was applied to missing data.

**Results**

School climate policy documents varied greatly in quantity and quality of accomplishment in each criterion. Even with a clear and compulsory list of characteristics stated by the law (see Chart 1), schools did not follow all of them and, when they did, not all the 23 items were equally elaborated. One school out of 22 achieved the maximum score in the 23 items, specified in Chart 2. Most of the schools completed the majority of the 23 items and scored above the medium point (Figure 1). This means that most of the sample

**Chart 2**

Rubric of the school climate policy document assessment

Items	Indicators	Score <sup>1</sup>
School assessment	School characteristics Management of school climate Involvement of school community members Detected conflicts Developed actions Coordination	
School climate committee	Members Meeting planning Action planning Criteria and requirements	
School-climate promotion classroom	Actions planning in Counselling Department Timetable Location, facilities and resources	
General rules of school climate Promoting positive school climate Measures to prevent, detect, mediate and solve possible conflicts Student representatives and their roles Parent representatives and their roles School community training		
	Strategies and procedures to publicize, follow-up and evaluate the school policy planning	Strategies and procedures
Collaboration with other institutions Incidence registries	Strategies of assessment	

Legend: 0 (none or basic/general information) and 1 (contextualized and detailed information).

**Table 1**  
Low or high score in items of school climate policy document versus social-emotional competencies and their factors

	Assessment			Committee			School-climate promotion classroom			Rules			Promoting positive school climate			Measures		
	Low M (SD)	High M (SD)	d	Low M (SD)	High M (SD)	d	Low M (SD)	High M (SD)	d	Low M (SD)	High M (SD)	d	Low M (SD)	High M (SD)	d	Low M (SD)	High M (SD)	d
Self-awareness	16.34 (2.67)	15.87 (2.84)	0.17	16.15 (2.73)	15.81 (2.87)	0.12	16.01 (2.69)	15.89 (3.04)	0.04	15.80 (2.45)	15.98 (2.83)	-0.06	15.96 (2.82)	15.98 (2.81)	-0.01	16.07 (2.63)	15.88 (2.97)	0.07
Self-management and motivation	12.22 (2.36)	12.02 (2.43)	0.08	12.04 (2.36)	12.09 (2.46)	-0.02	11.96 (2.38)	12.28 (2.47)	-0.13	11.79 (2.62)	12.08 (2.40)	-0.12	12.05 (2.43)	12.08 (2.40)	-0.01	11.99 (2.37)	12.13 (2.45)	-0.06
Social-awareness and prosocial behavior	23.87 (3.57)	23.71 (3.43)	0.05	23.71 (3.51)	23.77 (3.42)	-0.02	23.64 (3.48)	23.95 (3.42)	-0.09	23.13 (1.03)	23.79 (3.42)	-0.19	23.70 (3.49)	23.78 (3.44)	-0.02	23.68 (3.52)	23.79 (3.41)	-0.03
Responsible decision making	10.66 (2.75)	10.67 (2.76)	0.00	10.61 (2.71)	10.81 (2.81)	-0.09	10.60 (2.82)	10.79 (2.63)	-0.07	10.23 (2.95)	10.69 (2.75)	-0.17	10.62 (2.82)	10.70 (2.70)	-0.03	10.54 (2.85)	10.78 (2.67)	-0.09
Social and emotional competencies	63.02 (7.60)	62.32 (8.11)	0.09	62.54 (7.94)	62.42 (8.06)	0.02	62.22 (7.85)	63.00 (8.28)	-0.10	61.09 (7.95)	62.57 (8.00)	-0.19	62.36 (8.27)	62.58 (7.77)	-0.03	62.25 (7.77)	62.69 (8.22)	-0.06
	Students representatives			Parents representatives			Training			Strategies			Collaborations			Incidence		
	Low M (SD)	High M (SD)	d	Low M (SD)	High M (SD)	d	Low M (SD)	High M (SD)	d	Low M (SD)	High M (SD)	d	Low M (SD)	High M (SD)	d	Low M (SD)	High M (SD)	d
Self-awareness	15.99 (2.71)	15.97 (2.84)	0.01	15.92 (2.75)	15.99 (2.83)	-0.02	16.01 (2.65)	15.95 (2.90)	0.02	15.79 (2.93)	16.09 (2.73)	-0.11	15.96 (2.77)	16.02 (3.00)	-0.02	15.97 (2.44)	15.97 (2.86)	0.00
Self-management and motivation	12.11 (2.42)	12.05 (2.41)	0.03	12.06 (2.43)	12.06 (2.41)	0.00	12.11 (2.45)	12.04 (2.40)	0.03	11.99 (2.46)	12.11 (2.39)	-0.05	12.06 (2.40)	12.07 (2.50)	-0.004	11.86 (2.50)	12.09 (2.40)	-0.10
Social-awareness and prosocial behavior	23.63 (3.49)	23.77 (3.46)	-0.04	23.50 (3.52)	23.83 (3.43)	-0.10	23.69 (3.42)	23.77 (3.48)	-0.02	23.58 (3.42)	23.85 (2.73)	-0.09	23.78 (3.43)	23.59 (3.59)	0.06	23.50 (3.46)	23.78 (3.46)	-0.08
Responsible decision making	10.55 (2.75)	10.69 (2.76)	-0.05	10.59 (2.72)	10.69 (2.77)	-0.04	10.70 (2.75)	10.64 (2.76)	0.02	10.66 (2.80)	10.67 (2.73)	0.00	10.70 (2.75)	10.49 (2.78)	0.08	10.52 (2.84)	10.68 (2.75)	-0.06
Social and emotional competencies	62.29 (7.88)	62.53 (8.04)	-0.03	62.10 (7.86)	62.62 (8.05)	-0.07	62.60 (7.72)	62.41 (8.15)	0.02	62.04 (8.07)	62.75 (7.95)	-0.09	62.56 (8.05)	62.14 (7.80)	0.05	62.08 (7.61)	62.54 (8.06)	-0.06

Full denomination and description of items about school climate policy document are in the [Chart 1](#).

<sup>a</sup> Significant, where  $z = d / \sqrt{V}$ , where V is the corrected V ( $v^*3.41$ ) to correct for clustering.

**Table 2**  
Low or high score in items of school climate policy document versus bullying and cyberbullying

	Assessment			Committee			School-climate promotion classroom			Rules			Promoting positive school climate			Measures		
	Low <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	High <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>d</i>	Low <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	High <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>d</i>	Low <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	High <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>d</i>	Low <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	High <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>d</i>	Low <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	High <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>d</i>	Low <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	High <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>d</i>
Victimization	11.65	11.30	0.06	11.35	11.39	-0.01	11.43	11.26	0.03	11.79	11.35	0.08	11.76	11.05	0.13	11.36	11.39	-0.01
Bullying	(5.18)	(5.46)		(5.37)	(5.43)		(5.37)	(5.47)		(5.52)	(5.39)		(5.62)	(5.19)		(5.13)	(5.64)	
Perpetration Bullying	9.52	9.42	0.03	9.38	9.49	-0.03	9.46	9.39	0.02	9.24	9.45	-0.05	9.86	9.08	0.20 <sup>a</sup>	9.47	9.42	0.01
	(4.05)	(3.89)		(3.76)	(4.06)		(3.74)	(4.27)		(3.13)	(3.97)		(4.44)	(3.39)		(3.76)	(4.07)	
Victimization	13.87	14.14	-0.05	13.85	14.30	-0.09	13.83	14.63	-0.16	14.43	14.06	0.07	14.61	13.64	0.19	13.79	14.34	-0.11
Cyberbullying	(4.55)	(5.33)		(4.74)	(5.53)		(4.71)	(5.98)		(5.22)	(5.17)		(5.95)	(4.36)		(4.45)	(5.73)	
Perpetration	12.50	12.83	-0.08	12.57	12.93	-0.09	12.63	13.02	-0.09	12.54	12.77	-0.06	13.05	12.51	0.13	12.58	12.92	-0.08
Cyberbullying	(3.85)	(4.29)		(3.78)	(4.54)		(3.76)	(4.97)		(3.22)	(4.25)		(4.91)	(3.47)		(3.54)	(4.71)	
	Students representatives			Parents representatives			Training			Strategies			Collaborations			Incidence		
	Low <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	High <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>d</i>	Low <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	High <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>d</i>	Low <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	High <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>d</i>	Low <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	High <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>d</i>	Low <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	High <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>d</i>	Low <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	High <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>d</i>
Victimization	11.06	11.45	-0.07	10.80	11.58	-0.15	11.42	11.35	0.01	11.25	11.46	-0.04	11.49	10.88	0.11	11.43	11.36	0.01
Bullying	(4.94)	(5.51)		(4.81)	(5.59)		(5.36)	(5.42)		(5.37)	(5.42)		(5.48)	(5.02)		(5.62)	(5.37)	
Perpetration Bullying	9.05	9.54	-0.13	8.99	9.61	-0.16	9.10	9.62	-0.13	9.44	9.44	0.00	9.50	9.18	0.08	9.05	9.50	-0.11
	(3.42)	(4.04)		(3.23)	(4.14)		(3.37)	(4.17)		(3.87)	(3.96)		(4.01)	(3.54)		(3.03)	(4.04)	
Victimization	13.52	14.23	-0.13	13.31	14.38	-0.21	13.69	14.29	-0.12	13.98	14.15	-0.03	14.26	13.37	0.17	13.58	14.15	-0.12
Cyberbullying	(4.09)	(5.41)		(3.93)	(5.54)		(4.42)	(5.52)		(5.09)	(5.22)		(5.40)	(4.04)		(4.35)	(5.27)	
Perpetration	12.20	12.90	-0.17	12.28	12.94	-0.16	12.28	13.01	-0.17	12.88	12.68	0.05	12.79	12.62	0.04	12.32	12.82	-0.12
Cyberbullying	(2.67)	(4.51)		(2.94)	(4.57)		(2.90)	(4.73)		(4.14)	(4.23)		(4.28)	(3.83)		(2.88)	(4.36)	

Full denomination and description of items about school climate policy document are in the [Chart 1](#).

<sup>a</sup> Significant, where  $z > |1.96|$ , according to  $z = d / \sqrt{V}$ , where  $V$  is the corrected  $V (V * 3.41)$  to correct for clustering.

**Table 3**  
A logistic regression analysis with different bullying roles predicted by school climate policy, social and emotional competencies, and minorities

	Victims		Perpetrators		Bully-victims	
	OR	OR 95%CI	OR	OR 95%CI	OR	OR 95%CI
School climate policy	1.06	0.80–1.40	.99	0.56–1.72	1.08	0.78–1.48
Self-awareness	0.99	0.94–1.05	.98	0.88–1.10	1.02	0.96–1.09
Self-management and Motivation	0.96	0.90–1.03	1.04	0.92–1.17	0.98	0.91–1.05
Social-awareness and prosocial behavior	0.99	0.95–1.04	0.90	0.83–.98	0.94*	0.89–0.99
Responsible decision making	1.05	0.99–1.11	0.93	0.84–1.04	0.95	0.89–1.01
Minorities	1.34	0.97–1.85	1.19	0.62–2.26	1.72	1.21–2.43
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.04		.07		.04	
χ <sup>2</sup> (df)	6.65 (6)		11.78 (6)		26.01 (6)***	

\*p < .05.

\*\*\*p < .001.

(13 out of 22 schools) had a reported score of more than 50% of the theoretical maximum score. Nevertheless, 7 out of these 22 schools did not provide their school policy documents for this research and were not included in the analyses. More than one half of the schools described adequately the items of *school climate policy documents*, and they were well-explained and contextualized enough to be developed easily by the members of school community. Figure 1 shows the percentage of schools that received high scores on the school climate policy documents. Relations among *school climate policy documents quality*, *Social and Emotional Competencies*, *bullying* and *cyberbullying* are shown in Tables 1 and 2. These analyses are corrected for clustering in schools.

In Table 1, high and low *school climate policy quality* schools were compared according to the students' level in *social and emotional competencies*. The analyses showed that the quality of *school climate policy documents* has no significant relation to *Social and Emotional Competencies*, including their factors, among students, after controlling for clustering by school. Table 2 shows the mean scores in *bullying victimization*, *bullying perpetration*, *cybervictimization* and *cyberperpetration* in low versus high quality *school climate policy documents*. After controlling for clustering within schools, only *bullying perpetration* had a significant relation with *promoting positive school climate* ( $M_{Low} = 9.86, SD = 4.44$  vs.  $M_{High} = 9.08, SD = 3.39$ ;  $d = 0.20, V = 0.009, z = 2.084$ ).

Table 3 shows the logistic regression analyses with different bullying roles as the predicted variable and *school climate policy document quality*, *social and emotional competencies*, and being a member of an ethnic-cultural minority as predictors. Low *social awareness and prosocial behavior* (OR = 0.90, 95% CI = 0.83–0.98) was found to be a significant unique predictor of *bullying perpetration*. Also, low *social awareness and prosocial behavior* (OR = 0.94, 95% CI = 0.89–0.99) and being a member of an ethnic-cultural minority group (OR = 1.72, 95% CI = 1.21–2.43) were found to be significant unique predictors of *bully/victims*.

Table 4 shows logistic regression analyses with different cyberbullying roles as variables predicted by *school climate policy document quality*, *social and emotional competencies* and being a member of an ethnic-cultural minority. Low *self-management and motivation* (OR = 0.87, 95% CI = 0.77–0.98) was found to be a significant individual predictor of *cyberperpetration*. Low *responsible decision making* (OR = 0.90, 95% CI = 0.84–0.97) and being a member of an ethnic-cultural minority group (OR = 1.60, 95% CI = 1.09–2.34) were found to be significant individual predictors of *cyberbully-victim*. *School climate policy document quality* was not significantly related to *bullying* and *cyberbullying*, after controlling for covariates in the regression analyses.

**Discussion**

This research study describes the relation between the quality of school climate policy documents and social and emotional

competencies in students, as an individual factor. Also, this research shows the relation of bullying and cyberbullying to the quality of the school climate policy document, as a contextual factor. The high variety of school climate policies was found in many studies (Ascorra et al., 2019) including the results with the current sample. On the positive side, most of the schools in this sample possess the document and obtained a good score. Many schools offer school climate policy documents with well-designed and essential processes, tools, resources and proposals to promote a positive school climate, and reduce and avoid violence and bullying in different ways, according to scientific evidence about the important role of school climate in the bullying phenomenon (Lázaro-Visa et al., 2019; Zych et al., 2020).

Differences in the school climate policy documents were quantitative, because of the text length and the number of characteristics presented, and also qualitative, because of the different quality of descriptions and details provided to clarify every component of the document. Most of the schools included in this study elaborated and explicitly published a school climate policy document. However, it is interesting that, although every characteristic of the official document is detailed in the legal text (Orden, 2011), only one school followed it entirely and fulfilled all the required aspects of the school climate policy document.

School climate policy has some specific links to the social relationships of the students (Manzano-Sánchez & Valero-Valenzuela, 2019; Wang & Holcombe, 2010; Wisner, 2014). However, school climate policy documents were not significantly related to social and emotional competencies among students, including the four factors, in this study. So, the quality of the school climate policy document, well described or not, does not seem to have an effect on the development of social and emotional competencies among students. Therefore, promotion of these competencies does not depend on the documents, which opens up new reflections about the utility of written formal documents at schools or the process of promoting social and emotional competencies into schools. As shown by previous studies, these policies can be useful (Smith et al., 2012), but it is possible that some schools design the documents as a bureaucratic requirement and schools do not follow these documents on an everyday basis. The hypotheses of this study were partially rejected, because a high-quality of school climate policy documents was not related to high scores in social and emotional competencies of the students. Future studies should clarify to what extent these documents are actually used.

Bullying victimization, cyberperpetration and cybervictimization were not related to the quality of the school climate policy documents. High bullying perpetration was related to the low quality of the school climate policy document. This result was expected because a more detailed policy should be associated with less violence (Hong et al., 2018; Samara & Smith, 2008). Schools could try to develop better school climate policy documents. In this way, this

**Table 4**  
A logistic regression analysis with different cyberbullying roles predicted by school climate policy, social and emotional competencies, and minorities

	Cybervictims		Cyberperpetrators		Cyberbully-victims	
	OR	OR 95%CI	OR	OR 95%CI	OR	OR 95%CI
School climate policy	1.08	0.77–1.52	1.00	0.55–1.80	1.39	0.98–1.99
Self-awareness	1.00	0.93–1.07	1.01	0.90–1.13	1.03	0.96–1.10
Self-management and motivation	1.04	0.96–1.12	0.87*	0.77–.98	0.99	0.92–1.07
Social-awareness and prosocial behavior	0.98	0.93–1.04	1.03	0.94–1.13	0.96	0.91–1.02
Responsible decision making	1.01	0.94–1.08	0.93	0.83–1.04	0.90*	0.84–0.97
Minorities	1.23	0.84–1.82	1.43	0.75–2.70	1.60	1.09–2.34
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	<.01		.04		.39	
$\chi^2$ (df)	2.42 (6)		0.09 (6)		22.84 (6)**	

\* $p < .05$ .

\*\* $p < .01$ .

conclusion is very optimistic, because bullying perpetration could be reduced by an adequate promotion of a positive school climate, which encourages the improvement of the school climate policy document, as a response to improve the school situation (Acosta et al., 2019). The hypotheses of this study were partially accepted, but only in one criterion such as promoting positive school climate, that was related to less bullying perpetration among students.

According to the logistic regression analyses about bullying and cyberbullying roles, the bully/victim role was predicted by low social awareness and prosocial behavior, and being a member of ethnic-cultural minority group. Also, cyberperpetration and cyberbully-victims were predicted by less Social and Emotional Competencies (self-management and motivation, and responsible decision making, respectively). Therefore, it is crucial to promote these competencies in students to prevent and reduce the bullying phenomenon. Many studies have demonstrated that high levels of Social and Emotional Competencies are related to less bullying and cyberbullying (Cook et al., 2010; Nasaescu et al., 2018; Zych et al., 2018). Also, ethnic-cultural minority groups are significantly more vulnerable to be involved in bullying and cyberbullying than members of the majority group, as shown by previous studies (Llorent et al., 2016; Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2018). This research line is essential to prevent and reduce conflicts related to different ethnic-cultural groups in schools and society in general. More knowledge about minorities, and how they can be protected from the bullying phenomenon, is essential to prepare strategies to foster intercultural and inclusive schools and societies.

In the Spanish context, the school climate policy document was made compulsory more than a decade ago. Probably this structural initiative in the school system contributes to the prevention of bullying. Nevertheless, during the data collection for this study, dozens of teachers and school leadership teams reported that the school climate policy document was not worth the effort, especially when no specific problems were detected. The general feeling was that elaborating and implementing the school climate policy document required much effort, with no or insufficient benefits. However, according to the evidence from this study, promoting a positive school climate from the school climate policy document is worthy, as bullying perpetration could be reduced. At the same time, higher social and emotional competencies could decrease cyberperpetration and cyberbully-victims. Prevention and intervention programs should consider ethnic-cultural diversity to promote inclusive education in schools. The conception of policy as a process but not as a product (Perryman et al., 2017), gives rise to suggesting future work of a long-term nature to reach a more nuanced understanding about the impact of school policies. Future longitudinal studies could potentially discover causal relations which could not be studied in the current project, because of its a cross-sectional design. Also, the reliability of all scales was acceptable, but it could be improved in some subscales. Future studies should also combine self-reports with other types of data collection instruments.

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