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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exclusionary discipline practices and their relation to Chilean students' perception of school climate practices

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Abstract

One of the challenges of school climate policies has been to promote dialogical conflict resolution by reducing punitive practices and encouraging student participation. However, exclusionary punitive practices are still being used, and in Chile, they are considered acceptable forms of conflict resolution. In this study, we analyzed the association between students' reports of punitive and democratic school climate in a sample of 2459 eighth graders (mean age = 13.56, SD = 0.84) from 128 Chilean schools. Multilevel analyses showed that a higher perception of punitive practices and higher academic performance were associated with a higher perception of an inclusive, democratic, and peaceful school climate. The perception of a higher school-level frequency of punishment was associated with a higher perception of an inclusive and democratic school climate. We discuss the implications of these findings for an authoritarian school culture.

KEYWORDS

Chile, exclusionary, punitive, school climate, school discipline, students

1 | INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, international organizations and researchers have developed various efforts to promote school climate through the generation of public policies and practices that create safe and welcoming schools (Astor et al., 2017; Cohen & Espelage, 2020; UNESCO, 2008). School climate tends to be understood as having a neutral valence, with adjectives such as “positive or negative” added to show its implication in school life (Benbenishty et al., 2016; Berkowitz et al., 2015; Thapa et al., 2013; M. T. Wang & Degol, 2016). However, recent systematic literature (Barros da Silva et al., 2021) and public policy reviews (Cohen & Espelage, 2020) show that proper management of school climate implies an orientation that enhances social relationships based on care, community, respect for the other, security, and a sense of justice toward the process of teaching and learning. This implies continuous dialog for conflict resolution through the participation of the actors involved (Bickmore, 2001). From this perspective, school climate expresses a measure of school contexts that facilitate and hinder a positive or negative school experience of the different school actors (e.g., Benbenishty et al., 2016; Berkowitz et al., 2015; Thapa et al., 2013; M. T. Wang & Degol, 2016), insofar as it is constructed in interaction with contextual cultural factors (Larson et al., 2020).

Despite these international efforts, research has identified different logics guiding the policy of school climate toward very different action frameworks. On the one hand, a formative and preventive approach to climate involves proposing means of mediating and resolving conflicts in a peaceful, democratic, and participatory manner—for example, through more horizontal student–teacher relations, promotion of student voice and decision making, restorative discipline, and increased parental and community involvement (Cohen & Espelage, 2020; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). On the other hand is a punitive logic based on the regulation of school climate through control, punishment, and zero-tolerance policies (Calvin et al., 2017; Peguero & Bracy, 2014). These logics imply an increasing use of punitive disciplinary practices, among them exclusionary punitive practices, defined as sanctions against students that explicitly seek and imply that they

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leave class for a significant period of time and do not necessarily involve dialog or the ability to repair, such as sending students to detention, suspending them, expelling them, or referring them to a "more suitable school" (Calvin et al., 2017; Cole, 2013; Peguero & Bracy, 2014).

Although neither explicit physical nor verbal aggression may be involved in these sanctions, they may constitute implicit acts of symbolic aggression through social and educational exclusion on behalf of teachers and school staff when administered systematically and disproportionately to students with specific characteristics associated with minorities. This kind of permanent occurrence may be understood as symbolic or structural forms of school violence that exclude minorities, who have historically been excluded from equal opportunities to access, participate, learn, and be promoted in the regular school system (Debarbieux, 2012; Debarbieux & Blaya, 2002; Gage et al., 2021).

Research has shown that the disproportionate use of hierarchical and punitive forms of discipline is ineffective in preventing student peer-to-peer victimization (Skiba & Rausch, 2013) as well as the perception of bullying (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2016) and is positively associated with segregation and social exclusion of minorities (American Psychological Association [APA], 2008; Calvin et al., 2017; Cole, 2013; Peguero & Bracy, 2014; Shabazian, 2015). Punitive policies and practices align with what US researchers have called zero-tolerance policies (APA, 2008; NASEM, 2016), which assume that removing students who engage in disruptive behaviors maintains a safe learning environment and stops other students from participating in such actions. Once installed, these zero-tolerance policies and practices tend to have high adherence in schools and are difficult to remove (Skiba & Rausch, 2013), in spite of the negative consequences identified by researchers, including damage to teacher–student relationships due to a higher perception of injustice on behalf of students (APA, 2008; Gregory et al., 2010), and undermining of opportunities for dialog and redress in schools (Augustine et al., 2018).

A vast amount of research has provided evidence suggesting the need to avoid zero-tolerance and punitive disciplinary practices (Astor & Benbenishty, 2006, 2018) in the face of the negative consequences regarding student segregation and exclusion (APA, 2008; Calvin et al., 2017; Cole, 2013; Peguero & Bracy, 2014; Skiba & Rausch, 2013) and due to its ineffectiveness in reducing bullying and school-related behavioral and mental health issues (NASEM, 2016). Among the negative consequences, researchers have identified what is referred to as the school-to-prison pipeline (Bracy, 2010); that is, an increase of students in the juvenile penal system as a consequence of the rise in student expulsions from school, which damages not only their personal educational trajectories (Aizer & Doyle, 2015; Lovenheim & Owens, 2014; Western, 2006) but also their participation in society. In the United States, there is evidence that the school-to-prison pipeline is overrepresented by students from ethnic minorities, of lower socioeconomic levels, with disabilities or mental health problems, or in alternative care (Anyon et al., 2014; Owens, 2017; Shabazian, 2015).

However, despite evidence against zero-tolerance policies, they continue to be designed and implemented not only in the United States but also in other parts of the world (Glass, 2017), perpetuating the idea that expulsions are the solution for improving school climate. Some evidence shows schools systems characterized by a high use of punitive practices prioritize vigilance and control, strict adhesion to protocols, and constant warnings to school actors of the consequences they will face when they break the rules, reducing the role of the school to educate peace-building forms of social relationships (Bickmore, 2011; Fierro-Evans & Carbajal, 2019).

In Chile, research on school climate policies has identified two opposing approaches based on formative and punitive logics (Magendzo et al., 2012). On the one hand, high-stakes policies organized around the notion of assuring quality achievements, which include school climate assessment as an indicator of school quality and a complaint system for parents, tend to judicialize the way school conflicts are managed (V. López et al., 2020, 2021). On the other hand, a national policy on school climate asks schools to construct and sustain dialogical, preventive, and restorative conflict resolution (Muñoz et al., 2014). Qualitative research developed by UNICEF Chile and national researchers for more than a decade shows that the ambivalence that these discourses produce is usually resolved from a punitive logic (Llaña, 2018; V. López et al., 2019, 2020, 2021; UNICEF, 2021), reducing school life to the control of conduct and sanctions as a way of resolving conflicts. This ambivalent scenario generates tension in the implementation and translation of the discourses of school climate, both for those who design school climate policies and supervise schools (V. López et al., 2018) and for school administrators and staff members (Ascorra et al., 2018; V. López et al., 2018).

In this context, the Law on School Violence (Law 20,536, Ley No. 20.536, 2011) promulgated in 2011, featured a formative-preventive perspective through the creation of a new position, the school climate coordinator (*coordinador de convivencia escolar*); a new committee, the School Climate Committee (*Comité de Convivencia Escolar*) in schools that had no school councils; and a binding document, the School Climate Norms (*Reglamento de Convivencia Escolar*). The purpose of these three entities was to regulate school climate and encourage the participation of the entire educational community in decision-making processes concerning school violence and school climate. Conversely, and in tension with this formative perspective, the same Law on School Violence seeks the elimination of the conflict by defining a good school coexistence (*una buena convivencia escolar*) as "the harmonious coexistence of the members of the educational community, which supposes a positive interrelation between them and allows the adequate fulfillment of the educational objectives in a climate that favors the integral development of the students" (Article 16A). Also, it has been shown to have installed a punitive logic, through which schools are publicly punished with monetary or social sanctions if they do not generate mechanisms and protocols for action to address acts of violence, prevent conflicts, and promote school climate in their establishments (Carrasco-Aguilar et al., 2018; V. López et al., 2021).

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The punitive logic that underlies the Law on School Violence has pushed educational institutions to focus their efforts on generating concrete actions from a legal and regulatory perspective, "judicializing" school climate interventions (V. López et al., 2020). This means that the punishment and graduation of problematic behavior have been the preferred modes through which schools guarantee order and school safety, as well as how they legally respond to the demands of audits that arise from the Superintendency of Education, who oversees and audits schools that do not comply with the law (Ascorra et al., 2017; V. López et al., 2018, 2021).

In contrast, research in Chilean schools has shown that school principals, teachers, and school staff members construct meanings of climate that are not necessarily associated with formative, participatory, democratic, and inclusive practices. For example, a qualitative study performed by Ascorra et al. (2016) showed that in schools with positive levels of school climate, students were rarely involved in important decision-making processes concerning their interactions inside and outside of the classroom. In these schools, school life was highly regulated and controlled by adults and the school climate was understood as mainly keeping students safe.

In another qualitative discourse analysis, Ascorra et al. (2018) found that school climate discourses revolved around two axes: school discipline and citizenship formation. Discourses around school discipline viewed school climate as a means of controlling and normalizing students' behavior. Maintaining the school without conflict or violence and with a focus on compliance with standards and protocols, an individualizing and medical deficit-based labeling approach, a disciplinary emphasis on the body (uniform, haircut, etc.), and a greater presence of a school principal with an authoritarian leadership style formed part of this discourse (Heilbrun et al., 2017). In contrast, discourses around citizenship formation viewed school climate as an opportunity for student participation and fair norms were understood as a minimum but insufficient means of guaranteeing a positive school climate. Emphasis was placed on group interventions, dialogs to resolve conflicts, and distributed leadership among teachers and school staff members.

2 | PRESENT STUDY

In this study, we pose that school climate understood as school discipline (Ascorra et al., 2018) is associated with exclusionary punitive practices that permit schools to exclude students from relevant places and times for learning and participating in the classroom to ensure school safety (Losen, 2011; Skiba et al., 2014). In the Chilean context, exclusionary punitive practices are a normalized form of school discipline (V. López et al., 2011) and continue to be used in schools as a means of responding to what teachers tend to call problems related to student misbehavior: insults, threats, and harassment of other students and teachers (Muñoz et al., 2007, 2014). Although current regulations, such as Circular No. 1 of the Superintendency of Education, have guided schools in typifying faults using a grading scale of minor, serious, and very serious and have prohibited the use of suspension in case of minor faults such as being late and not doing homework, suspension is still widely used and accepted as a way of regulating students' behavioral problems. Chilean laws and regulations in force do not prohibit expulsion. In fact, a recently passed bill called the Safe Classroom Bill (Ley No. 21.128, 2018) now grants school principals greater authority to rapidly expel students who are involved in serious risk behavior such as carrying weapons at school and putting teachers' lives in danger.

In this study, we argue that this public "common sense" is also present in the school system and students themselves. Although, theoretically, punitive disciplinary practices might be considered antagonists to formative, democratic forms of "doing" school climate, in authoritarian cultures, members of the school community, including students, might be highly appreciative of different forms of punishments for students who misbehave, as a way of keeping the classroom a "safe and supportive haven" (V. López, 2020). The high valuation of punitive practices on behalf of students might be theoretically linked to what they believe is a positive school climate. If so, this might be an expression of the legitimization of different forms of segregating and excluding students with highly disruptive and demeaning behavior as a function of the black sheep effect (Marques & Páez, 2011).

Consequently, there is a need to examine perceptions among students of punitive practices and the association with their perceptions of school climate practices. However, to date, no quantitative studies have explored these associations. Therefore, our objective was to understand the associations between punitive disciplinary practices and school climate practices. Specifically, we sought to answer the following research question: Are students' perceptions of punitive practices in their schools related to their perceptions of inclusive, democratic, and peaceful climate practices, and if so, what is the specific contribution? We predicted that punitive practices would be negatively associated with democratic, inclusive, and peaceful practices in schools.

To control for variables that are known to influence school climate, we included in our analyses the gender and grade point average (GPA) of students. Although there is evidence that girls have more positive perceptions of school climate than boys (Buckley et al., 2003; Koth et al., 2008; W. Wang et al., 2014), some studies have found no gender differences (De Pedro et al., 2016; Kuperminc et al., 2001). Positive associations between school climate and students' academic performance are widely known (Benbenishty et al., 2016; Berkowitz et al., 2015; McCoy et al., 2013; W. Wang et al., 2014), accordingly we controlled for students' GPA.

3 | METHOD

3.1 | Design

The study design was quantitative and cross-sectional, using a representative sample of three regions of Chile.

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3.2 | Participants

A stratified simple random sampling method to select schools was used. The stratification was used to reach a sample size representative of 3 of the 16 regions of Chile (Tarapacá, Valparaíso, and Metropolitan) that were selected for this study; these regions are among the largest in the country and all three feature mainly urban schools. In each of the three regions, the sample was stratified by the type of school funding (public, private subsidized, and private). The sampling framework used was the Ministry of Education's 2014 official directory of schools. This directory has a record of the characteristics of all the schools in the Chilean educational system, including the region, exact location, and type of school funding. The sample size had a 95% confidence level, with a margin of error of 10%. A sample of 2841 eighth-grade students (mean age = 13.56, SD = 0.84) from 130 public, private subsidized, and private schools in three regions of Chile participated in this study.

For data analyses, the sample was restricted to students with no missing information on their reports of school climate, exclusionary practices, gender, and GPA. The final sample was composed of 2459 students (51% girls) from 128 schools (see Table 1). Mean differences of the study variables were tested between the initial and final sample with Student's *t* test, but were not statistically significant.

TABLE 1 Sample characteristics.

Variables	Initial sample (N = 2841) Mean (or %)	SD	Final sample (N = 2459) Mean (or %)	SD
School climate	3.66	0.80	3.67	0.79
Inclusive practices	3.64	0.80	3.66	0.79
Democratic practices	3.56	0.86	3.57	0.86
Peaceful practices	3.76	0.92	3.77	0.92
Exclusionary punitive practices	3.57	0.88	3.58	0.88
GPA	4.60	1.25	4.60	1.25
Gender				
Male	48.2	-	48.9	-
Female	50.6	-	51.1	-
Did not respond	1.2	-	0	-
Region				
Tarapacá	16.9	-	16.3	-
Valparaíso	46.8	-	48.0	-
Metropolitan	36.4	-	35.7	-
Type of school				
Public (municipal)	38.3	-	37.1	-
Private subsidized	60.8	-	61.9	-
Private	0.9	-	1.0	-

3.3 | Measures and instruments

3.3.1 | School climate practices

A. Chaparro et al. (2015), A. Chaparro, Caso, Díaz et al. (2012), and A. Chaparro, Caso, and Fierro (2012) developed a student-reported instrument to evaluate inclusive, democratic, and peacefully oriented school climate practices (see Table 2 for definitions). In this instrument, school climate practices are defined as specific types of behavior performed by teachers as reported by students, as opposed to students' overall appraisal or perception of school climate. Validation of this instrument in a Mexican sample of students showed adequate psychometric properties. Caso et al. (2013) developed and validated, also in Mexico, an abbreviated version of this instrument. This reduced version of the instrument consists of 31 items that offer specific information regarding school climate practices that promote conditions favorable to a democratic, inclusive, and peaceful school climate. Valdés et al. (2018) adapted and validated this abbreviated version in Chile. The results of the adaptation and validation of the Mexican instrument in Chile indicated adequate validity and internal consistency of the three dimensions measured (inclusive practices: $\alpha = .88$; democratic practices: $\alpha = .87$; peaceful practices: $\alpha = .91$). Confirmatory factor analyses showed a suitable fit (see Table 3). Items are presented with 5-point Likert-type answers (1 = *never*, 2 = *sometimes*, 3 = *regularly*, 4 = *almost always*, 5 = *always*). All items are shown in Supporting Information: Table 1.

3.3.2 | Exclusionary punitive practices

An ad hoc scale was developed in this study to measure exclusionary punitive practices. In this instrument, punitive practices were defined as sanctions against students that imply that they leave the class or school for a significant period, do not imply dialog, and are not restorative. This definition was based on the literature on exclusionary discipline (Andrew & Blake, 2021; Calvin et al., 2017; Cole, 2013; Peguero & Bracy, 2014; Skiba et al., 2014; Villaoslada & Torrejo, 2004). Although the Anglo-Saxon literature tends to restrict the definition and operationalization of exclusionary disciplinary practices as suspensions or expulsions (Andrew & Blake, 2021; Skiba & Rausch, 2013; Skiba et al., 2014), the Ibero-American literature incorporates these types of punitive practices as a continuum of what is called a punitive approach to school climate management (*modelo punitivo de gestión de la convivencia escolar*; V. López et al., 2019; Villaoslada & Torrejo, 2004), which involves the administration of sanctions or punishment as the main consequence of faults derived due to the lack of accomplishment of defined school norms, including frequent, day-to-day practices such as sending students to detention or opening a disciplinary file, as well as less frequent but harsher sanctions such as suspending or expelling a student. Thus, item construction included both minor and major sanctions that imply leaving the classroom or school due to misbehavior and do not involve dialog or restoration.

TABLE 2 Dimensions of school climate practices, number of items per dimension, and description.

Dimension	Items	Definition
Inclusive practices	12	Inclusive practices recognize the dignity of all people independent of their gender, ethnic background, religion, culture, social group, and capabilities, among others.
Democratic practices	9	Democratic practices address students' participation and co-responsibility in the generation and monitoring of school climate agreements and conflict resolution.
Peaceful practices	10	Peaceful practices explore the extent to which teachers establish human interactions based on appreciation, respect and tolerance between students; address prevention of risk behaviors; take care of spaces and collective goods, and promote restorative practices and community reintegration.

TABLE 3 Exploratory factor analysis using maximum-likelihood estimation with oblimin rotation ($N = 2868$).

Construct/items	*M*	SD	Loadings	Communality
Punitive practices (*M* = 3.56, SD = 0.94, Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$)				
In this school, students with behavior problems are punished.	3.72	1.24	0.68	0.47
In this school, students with behavior problems are suspended.	3.68	1.24	0.75	0.58
In this school, students who interfere with good classroom climate are expelled from the classroom.	3.63	1.24	0.63	0.40
In this school, students are invited at the end of the year to look for another school.	2.93	1.28	0.51	0.32
In this school, students who do not finish their classwork are not allowed to go out to the playground.[a]	2.42	1.30	0.29	0.23
In this school, students who present major behavior problems are sent to the detention room.	3.91	1.15	0.57	0.35

Note: Eigenvalue = 2.10; Bartlett test = 3480.57, $p < .001$; KMO = 0.825.

Abbreviation: KMO, Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin.

[a]Item was not considered in the following analyses due to a factor loading <0.30.

TABLE 4 Summary of psychometric properties of the school climate and punitive practices.

Practice	*k*	*α*	*M*	SD	χ^2	*df*	*p* Value	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Inclusive	12	.880	3.64	0.84	867.30	54	.001	0.929	0.913	0.072
Democratic	9	.874	3.56	0.90	333.62	27	.001	0.961	0.957	0.056
Peaceful	10	.911	3.75	0.96	687.00	35	.001	0.955	0.942	0.081
Punitive	5	.765	3.56	0.94	23.95	5	.001	0.994	0.988	0.036

Note: *k* represents the number of items that composed each dimension.

Abbreviations: CFI, comparative fit index; TLI, Tucker–Lewis index; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation.

The scale was constructed by the research team based on previous qualitative studies (V. López et al., 2011, 2019). An initial set of eight items underwent content validation by two external researchers holding PhDs in education and psychology and three professionals working in schools as a teacher, school psychologist, and social worker. Content validation included the criterion of pertinence (whether items were consistent with the definition of exclusionary punitive practices) and sufficiency (whether the array of punitive practices sufficiently expressed punitive disciplinary measures in the Chilean school system). Two items were dropped and two items underwent wording modifications. The final scale of six items measures teacher-performed behavior aimed at having the student leave the classroom due to misbehavior, as reported by students. The instrument asks students to "please evaluate the frequency in which the following actions occur in your school," and has a 5-point Likert-type answers (1 = *never*, 2 = *sometimes*, 3 = *regularly*, 4 = *almost always*, 5 = *always*).

An exploratory factor analysis with an initial sample of 242 eighth-grade students was performed through maximum-likelihood estimation with Oblimin rotation after adequacy tests (Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin [KMO] = 0.825; Bartlett's test: $\chi^2[15] = 3480.57$, $p < .001$). Findings show the unidimensionality of the scale, but one item was not considered in our final analyses because it had a factor loading below .30 (see Table 3). The final five items are shown in Supporting Information: Table 1, and their psychometric properties, including confirmatory factor analysis for the final sample of 2841 students, are shown in Table 4.

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3.3.3 | Gender

Students' gender, included as a control variable, was self-reported in the survey (0 = *boy*, 1 = *girl*).

3.3.4 | GPA

Students' GPA, included as a control variable, was self-reported in the survey (*M* = 4.60, SD = 1.25, min = 1 and max = 7).

3.4 | Procedure

Institutional review board approval was obtained from the authors' institution. For survey administration, the research team contacted the school principals to explain the study objectives and procedures and requested authorization to administer the survey in school facilities. To reach a representative sample, 211 schools were approached, of which 130 (61.6%) agreed to participate. Once authorized, the research team provided printed informed-consent forms to be signed by students' parents/legal guardians, which was considered only if they returned the signed consent form. Before the administration of the questionnaires, students were asked to agree to participate in the research project (informed assent). Less than 10% of students did not agree or did not complete the informed assent form, reaching a total sample of 2841 students. The instruments were administered during school hours. The personal identities of the participants and of the schools were protected during data analyses.

3.5 | Data analyses

The statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS 21 and Stata 13. We used correlations with each of the three school climate practices as the outcome variables. Additionally, we performed a multilevel analysis using the same outcome variables and the full scale of school climate practices, taking into consideration individual factors (Level 1 or individual level) and school factors (Level 2 or school level). At the student level, we included students' reports of punitive practices, gender, and GPA. At the school level, we included the school mean of reports of punitive practices, proportion of girls in the school, school mean GPA, region, and type of school funding.

4 | RESULTS

The average responses of the items that form the scales used in this study for the whole sample and differences by gender were computed. The highest group average among the various dimensions of school climate practices was the perception of peaceful practices (*M* = 3.75, SD = 0.96) and the lowest was for democratic practices (*M* = 3.56, SD = 0.90). For punitive practices, the highest scores corresponded to sending students to detention (*M* = 3.91, SD = 1.15) and the lowest was the practice of schools inviting misbehaving students to find another school at the end of the school year (*M* = 2.93, SD = 1.28). In general, boys reported a higher frequency of the use of punitive practices, but only the items of being punished for bad behavior and being expelled from the classroom were statistically significant (see Supporting Information: Table 1).

4.1 | Association between punitive practices and school climate practices

Pearson's correlation results suggested that among the school climate practices, democratic, and inclusive practices had a high and positive correlation ($r = .83$, $p < .001$), as did the association between democratic and peaceful practices ($r = .79$, $p < .001$). Punitive practices had a moderate positive correlation with inclusive ($r = .46$, $p < .001$), democratic ($r = .47$, $p < .001$), and peaceful ($r = .50$, $p < .001$) practices (see Table 5).

4.2 | Contribution of punitive practices to school climate practices

Table 6 shows the results of the two-level hierarchical linear regression analysis. We estimated the same model using as the dependent variable each of the three dimensions of the school climate practices scale and the full scale. At Level 1, when inclusive practices were considered as the dependent variable, the exclusionary punitive practices had a statistical and positive coefficient, wherein a higher frequency of punitive practices predicted better school climate reports ($\beta = .398$, $p < .001$). Higher reports of GPA also were associated with higher values on this dimension ($\beta = .047$, $p < .001$). Gender was not statistically significant in this model. At Level 2, only the school mean of exclusionary practices was significant. The perception of a higher school-level frequency of punishment was associated with a higher frequency of inclusive practices ($\beta = .206$, $p < .001$).

TABLE 5 Correlation between perception of punitive practices and school climate practices.

	1	2	3
1. Inclusion			
2. Democracy	.83*		
3. Peace	.75*	.79*	
4. Punitive	.46*	.47*	.50*

Note: The correlations between the variables were calculated with Pearson's correlation coefficient (bilateral). Significance tests were adjusted for multiple comparisons with Bonferroni correction.
*$p < .001$.

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TABLE 6 Multilevel model results predicting inclusive, democratic, and peaceful school climate practices from individual and school-level variables using maximum-likelihood estimation (*N* = 2459 at 128 schools).

	Inclusive		Democratic		Peaceful		School climate (Full scale)	
	b	SE	*b*	SE	*b*	SE	*b*	SE
Constant	1.169**	0.430	0.763	0.431	0.417	0.448	0.826*	0.418
Student level								
Exclusionary punitive practices	0.398***	0.016	0.443***	0.017	0.514***	0.018	0.449***	0.015
Gender (female)	−0.012	0.028	−0.046	0.031	0.015	0.032	−0.014	0.027
GPA	0.047***	0.012	0.065***	0.013	0.069***	0.013	0.059***	0.011
School level								
Exclusionary punitive practices (school mean)	0.206***	0.091	0.207*	0.092	0.152	0.095	0.188*	0.089
Proportion of female students	0.135	0.166	0.164	0.167	0.250	0.173	0.184	0.161
GPA (school mean)	0.023	0.059	0.049	0.059	0.117	0.061	0.057	0.057
Region (reference category: Metropolitan region)								
Tarapacá	−0.138	0.095	−0.257**	0.094	−0.261**	0.098	−0.210*	0.092
Valparaíso	−0.024	0.069	-0.105	0.069	−0.052	0.072	−0.053	0.068
School funding (reference category: Public)								
Subsidized private	−0.033	0.062	-0.010	0.062	0.073	0.064	0.007	0.061
Private	−0.001	0.248	0.160	0.249	0.391	0.259	0.169	0.241
Variance explained								
% Level 1	23.17		22.81		26.78		28.47	
% Level 2	30.16		33.67		39.88		33.66	
AIC	5037.63		5436.74		5591.37		4792.43	
BIC	5113.12		5512.24		5666.86		4867.92	

Note: Explained variance compared to a null model.

Abbreviations: AIC, Akaike information criterion; BIC, Bayesian information criterion; GPA, grade point average.

$^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$.

With respect to democratic school climate practices, the results were similar. At Level 1, the punitive practices scale was significant and positive, meaning that higher reports of the frequency of this kind of practices were associated with better student perceptions of a democratic school climate ($\beta = .443$, $p < .001$). Concerning the other variables included, only students' GPA ($\beta = .065$, $p < .001$) was statistically significant, with a positive relationship with democratic practices. At Level 2, the same variables as in the previous model were statistically significant and their coefficients had the same sign, wherein the school mean of higher reports of punishment was associated with a higher perception of the use of democratic practices ($\beta = .207$, $p < .05$). The region of the school also had a significant coefficient, wherein schools from the Tarapacá region had a lower frequency of democratic practices than schools from the Metropolitan region ($\beta = -.257$, $p < .01$).

The model for peaceful school climate practices showed similar results at the individual level, wherein the punitive practices scale had a positive relationship with peaceful school climate practices ($\beta = .514$, $p < .001$); a higher student GPA ($\beta = .069$, $p < .001$) also predicted a higher frequency of peaceful school climate practices. At Level 2, however, the school mean of the scale of exclusionary practices was not statistically significant. Only the region of the school predicted a significant coefficient, wherein schools from Tarapacá had lower scores for peaceful school climate practices ($\beta = -.261$, $p < .01$).

The final model shows the results of the full scale of school climate practices. The results at the individual level were consistent with the previous estimates, wherein a higher frequency of use of exclusionary practices ($\beta = .449$, $p < .001$) and a higher GPA ($\beta = .059$, $p < .001$) was related to a better perception of school climate. At the school level, the school mean of exclusionary practices was also associated with higher reports of school climate ($\beta = .188$, $p < .05$), and the Tarapacá region had lower scores of school climate than schools from the Metropolitan region.

The bottom part of Table 6 shows the explained variance at the student and school levels compared to a null model that only considered the intercept in the estimation. The explained variance in the reports of school climate practices shows that the models

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explained more of the variance at the school level (between 30.1% and 39.8%) than at the student level (between 22.8% and 28.4%).

5 | DISCUSSION

In this study, we examined the contribution of student-reported exclusionary punitive disciplinary practices used by teachers to student-reported perceptions of inclusive, democratic, and peaceful school climate practices in their schools, considering both students' individual responses and the school-level means. Findings showed that perceptions of punitive practices contributed to explaining differences in students' perceptions of the practices of an inclusive, democratic, and peaceful school climate, both at the individual and school level, with a greater explained variance at the school level.

Contrary to our predictions, when considering individual student reports, students who reported higher levels of punitive practices in their schools also reported higher levels of inclusive, democratic, and peaceful school climate practices. These results are surprising given the literature that shows that the existence of sanction and control practices are associated with practices of segregation, exclusion, and authoritarianism that challenge the possibilities of respect, dialog, and participation in a school environment associated with a democratic, inclusive, and peaceful climate (Augustine et al., 2018; Gregory et al., 2016; Heilbrun et al., 2017; Losen, 2011). Most importantly, the fact that more variance was explained by differences between schools, more than by differences within schools, suggests that school experiences shape students' perceptions and valuations of punitive practices as they relate to school climate practices. These findings suggest that some schools create exclusionary punitive school cultures associated with authoritarian cultures (Berg & Cornell, 2016) that are perceived as positive by students, which might perpetuate nondialogical or nonrestorative forms of conflict resolution in schools (Villaoslada & Torrejo, 2004).

We predicted that this could be associated with the fact that in many Chilean schools, punitive practices are associated with how schools manage school climate through behavioral control of students (Ascorra et al., 2017, 2018), which is conceptually linked and legally binded to the idea of a harmonious coexistence without conflicts (Law on School Violence, Article 16A). The discourse of punitive approaches at the policy level is thus intertwined with the management of school climate at the school level, validating the actions of the schools to regulate -and restrict- dialogical and participatory interactions through various mechanisms of punishment, suspension, and expulsion in response to behavior that generates disruption and is registered as out of regulation (V. López et al., 2021; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). In Chile, Ascorra et al. (2018) showed that the discourse of punitive strategies validates the need for disciplinary action associated with the elimination of conflicts and is accompanied by an individualized approach to the treatment of differences in schools. These kinds of approaches to school climate hinder the efforts and commitment of schools and their territories toward democratic and restorative dialog between students and among students, teachers, and school staff members (Augustine et al., 2018; Fierro-Evans & Carbajal, 2019). This is even more important in the Chilean school culture because previous evidence shows the mediating role of the school climate in educational results and its differentiated scores according to the type of institutions and territories (V. López et al., 2012).

The literature on authoritarian school climate is not yet concordant in terms of its effects on students' experience in school (Larson et al., 2020). Although evidence supports the claim that authoritarian schools obtain lower scores in school climate evaluations (Berg & Cornell, 2016), there is also evidence of a lower use of punitive practices when there is an authoritarian school climate, because clear rules and known to all school staff members and students would contribute to the administration of fewer exclusionary practices in the school (Gerlinger & Wo, 2016; Heilbrun et al., 2017). In this debate, the findings from this study are relevant because they provide initial evidence that school climate can be perceived by students as both (at the same time) (a) punitive in the sense of exclusionary discipline and (b) peaceful, inclusive, and democratic.

Given that punitive and zero-tolerance policies are associated with the need to attend to issues of school safety (APA, 2008; Astor & Benbenishty, 2018), the findings of this study suggest that in Chilean schools, practices focused on school safety seem to be prioritized over practices focused on strengthening school participation, care, community, and a sense of justice (Barros da Silva et al., 2021). Consistent with the literature on Chilean schools (Ascorra et al., 2016, 2018), we found low levels of student participation. For example, the least frequent practice according to students was measured by the item "In this school, we are allowed to offer our opinions regarding the way school rules are administered," whereas the most frequent was "In my school, teachers depend on school norms to resolve conflicts that arise in the classroom." In this respect, Potocnjak et al. (2011) have argued that in Chilean culture, aggression and coercive strategies are conceived as acceptable forms of social organization and teachers are likely to view the use of coercive strategies as ways of responding to stereotypical images of the cultural context from which their students come. Recently, research on the ethics of Chilean childcare has shown how punishment is expected, accepted, and legitimized as a form of socially participative bonding and interaction in the school (Winkler et al., 2020). This rationale is consistent with Huang and Cornell's (2020) findings in the United States, which show high rates of teacher approval of zero-tolerance policies as a perceived effective discipline practice for organizing the school; even when these threaten the possibilities of building and sustaining more democratic and inclusive schools, as revealed by other research (Gage et al., 2021; NASEM, 2016).

In addition to cultural factors, it is possible that these findings are related to students' need for a certain level of order and standardization in the classroom (Cornell et al., 2015). In this respect, Cornell et al. (2016) called this an authoritative school discipline or climate in which students receive sufficient structure and support

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from adults present at school (Heilbrun et al., 2017; also see Gregory et al., 2010; Jia et al., 2016). Perhaps, then, what students in this study are signaling is the need for more normalized classroom and school climates in terms of student misconduct and behavior, shedding light on the hypothesis that students might be associating punitive practices with formative, inclusive, democratic, and peaceful school practices as a way of affirming the need to reduce actions of violence against and among them. However, findings from our study do not provide conclusive data for this interpretation. Further qualitative research is needed to explore how students and school staff members construct meanings and valuations with respect to punitive practices, authoritarian school cultures, and authority in school.

In this sense, we suggest further research that explores the school experiences of students who are punished based on a discourse committed to a positive school climate, dialog, and peace while also embracing invisible practices of excluding differences associated with students who are difficult to educate (Veiga-Neto & Corcini, 2007). The fact that students' individual GPA, but not their gender, was significatively associated with higher perceptions of an inclusive and democratic school climate suggests that ableism might be a key characteristic of exclusionary practices. Qualitative findings in schools with positive school climates in Chile suggest that lower-achieving students receive an academic and social experience that is poorer and more discriminatory than high-achieving students (Ramírez-Casas del Valle et al., 2020, 2021). Exclusionary discipline practices can result in illegal discrimination if they involve differentiated treatment and disproportionate punishment rates based on stereotypes of race, ability, gender, or social class among students (Heilbrun et al., 2017). The structural racist bias underlying exclusionary discipline has long-term effects on students' school outcomes (Andrew & Blake, 2021), which need to be further studied in Latin American countries and other middle- and low-income countries. However, and despite known authoritarian, patriarchal, and socially stratified cultures in Latin America, the presence and correlates of exclusionary punitive practices have been scarcely studied in these latitudes.

Finally, it is important to define the relation between disciplinary practices of exclusion, school climate, and school culture. Of the reviewed studies, most agreed that the practices of conflict solving through dialog would be antagonistic to the regulation of conflict through expulsion. However, our findings suggest that these assumptions need to be questioned and understood as historical products of first, the representations and the exercise of pedagogical authority, and second, the characteristics of the national and school culture. In Chile, the national and school authoritarian culture has a recent history tracing back to the Chilean dictatorship and its cultural legacy. This authoritarian culture implies three ideologies: national security, the market, and moral values, all of which affected the expressive culture of the school. School principals were designated by the regime and generally closed their boundaries and forms of communication with the outside (Muñoz et al., 2007), promoted vertical hierarchies and respect for authorities and programs (G. López et al., 1984), and introduced a meritocratic morality (Brunner, 1986). These ideals were not installed through exercise and coercion, but were often part of the cultural transmission of the schools. After the return to democracy, the recognition of pedagogical authority is still being negotiated and redefined through structures of legitimation that allow students to comply with school norms by fostering teachers' authentic interest in their students' learning, through more symmetric forms of communication and interaction, and through the administration of fair norms that are not contrary to the administration of sanctions (Carrasco-Aguilar & Luzón, 2019; Neut, 2019). This requires distinguishing between a coercive or imposing authority that denies the legitimate diversity of the "other" and an authority that recognizes the expression of students' diversity (Neut, 2019).

Regarding the limitations of this study, the sample was representative of only three (of 16) regions in Chile. Two of these regions (Metropolitan, Valparaíso) are among the largest regions in the country and all three feature mainly urban schools. Because the design of this study was cross-sectional, it was not possible to identify causal relations between the study variables. The students who participated in the study were all enrolled in eighth grade (the final year of primary school in Chile); hence, our results only are representative of one school stage. Another limitation is that the measures used were self-reported by the students, which is a source of bias. Finally, we did not gather information regarding students' socioeconomic status, racial and ethnic backgrounds, or cognitive abilities, which would allow exploring the overrepresentation of students based on discrimination by race, class, and ableism. Future studies should consider a longitudinal approach to identify a causal relationship between school climate and exclusionary punitive practices, consider different grade levels, and gather information regarding students' social and cultural backgrounds. We also suggest that future studies also examine the role of urbanicity, the size of schools in terms of student enrollment, and other school characteristics with respect to the relation between punitive practices and school climate.

In sum, our findings provide initial evidence of a positive association between exclusionary punitive discipline and inclusive, democratic, and peaceful school climate in Chilean schools. We conclude that this positive association is probably related to a positive valuation of punitive exclusionary discipline on behalf of students, which in turn is probably intertwined with an authoritarian school culture. We suggest that future studies examine and comprehend the interrelations between school discipline, school climate, and school culture in schools embedded in authoritarian cultures, and its effects on students' educational and life trajectories.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data set is not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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