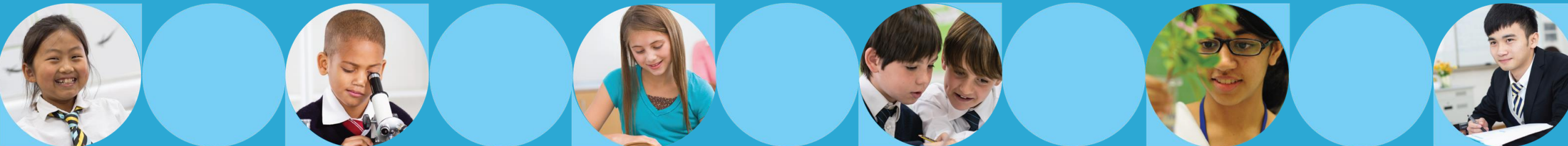# Welcome to the Cambridge Schools Conference

A positive school climate as a key strategy to prevent problem behaviours at school

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This presentation is about:

▶ A positive school climate: definitions and concepts

▶ Theories behind a positive school climate

▶ Behaviours that negatively impact a positive school climate

▶ What can be done to promote a positive school climate

Teachers and school leaders matter

▸ Teachers and school leaders can have a great impact on individuals and societies.

▸ A big change is produced by small acts, on an everyday basis.
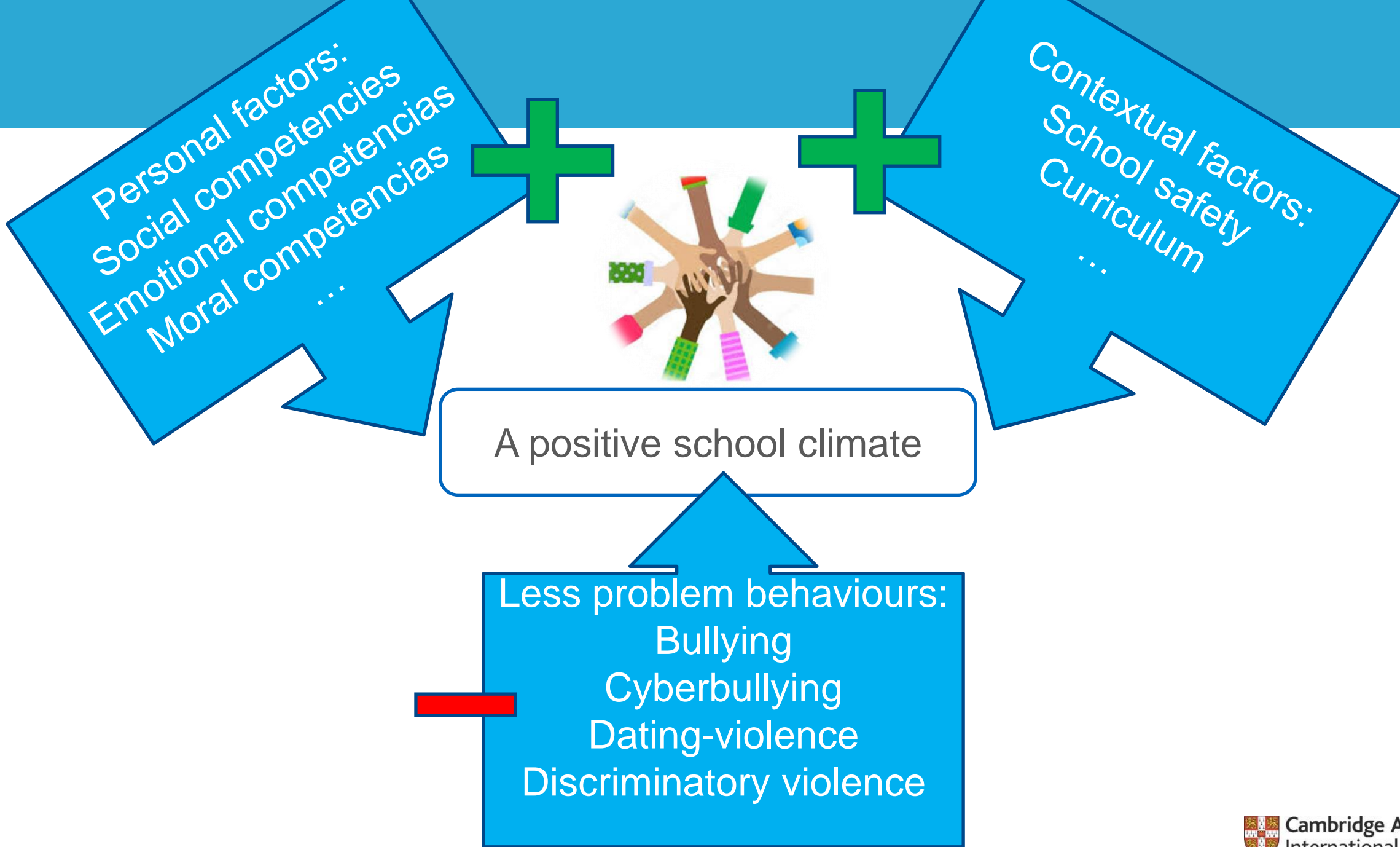
Education in the 21st century

Traditional schools were places that trained academic skills only. The 21st century schools need to train academic skills, and also educate, promoting competencies for life, prosocial interpersonal relationships, and citizenship.

A positive school climate

A positive school climate is a combination of personal and contextual factors that increase prosocial interpersonal relationships among students and decrease problem behaviours (Zych, 2021).

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Personal factors:
Social competencies
Emotional competencias
Moral competencias
…

＋

Contextual factors:
School safety
Curriculum
…

＋

A positive school climate

Less problem behaviours:
Bullying
Cyberbullying
Dating-violence
Discriminatory violence

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A positive school climate is a key to life success

There is a lot of scientific evidence on the benefits of a positive school climate. Some examples are:

▶ Classmates and teacher **bonding** in childhood was related to **less bullying** in adolescence according to a study with over 900 Swiss adolescents (Zych et al., 2020).

▶ In a review study, **social and emotional learning** was found to **positively impact** school performance, social and emotional skills, attitudes and behaviour (Durlak et al., 2011).

▶ In a study with over 2,600 US adolescents, a **positive school climate** was found to be a longitudinal predictor of **academic achievement** (Daily et al., 2020).
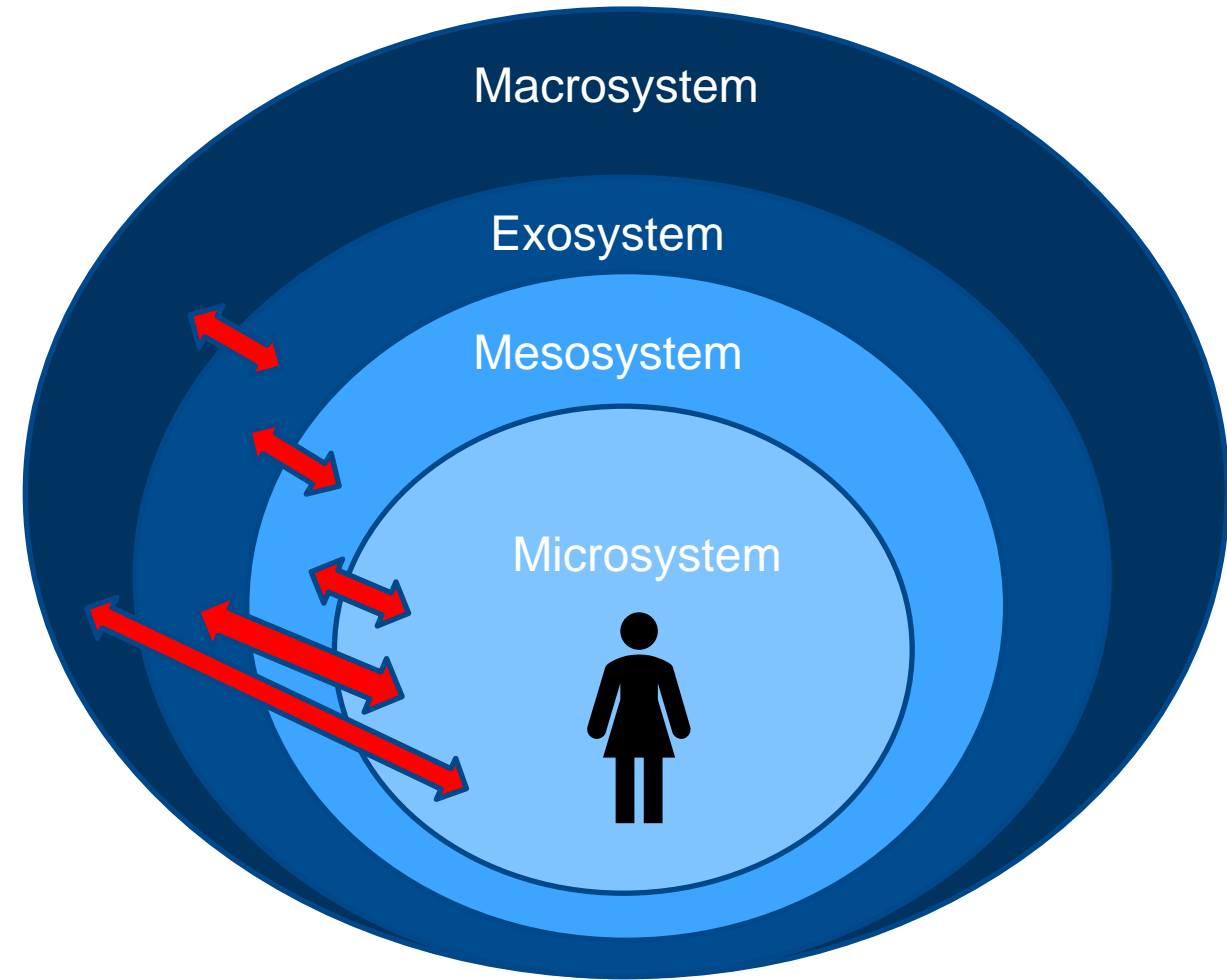
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Theories behind a positive school climate
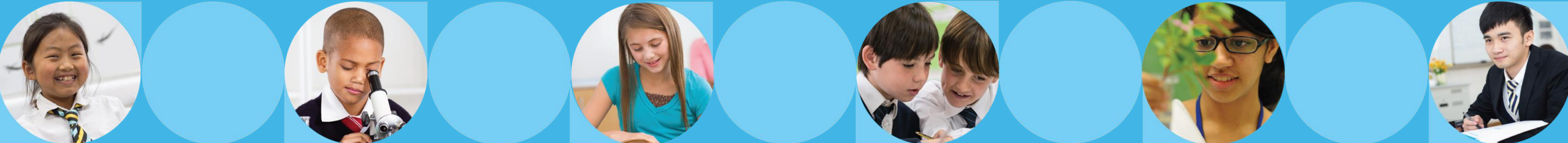
Bronfenbrenner´s ecological theory

▸ Individuals are analysed in different environments that create an interconnected system of elements.

▸ Students influence proximal environments (such as their families or teachers) and distant environments (such as their parents' work or political situation).

▸ Different proximal and distant environments influence young people.

▸ There is also an interaction among different environments.

Macrosystem

Exosystem

Mesosystem

Microsystem

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Bronfenbrenner´s ecological theory

▸ There is a complex system of interpersonal and social relationships, and small changes in one part of the system might cause big changes in a different part of the system.

▸ Promotion of a positive school climate and prevention of antisocial behaviours needs to be understood from a holistic, systemic and ecological approach (Ortega-Ruiz, Del Rey & Casas, 2013).

▸ Interactions among peers are especially important, there are some peer norms regarding prosocial or antisocial behaviour.
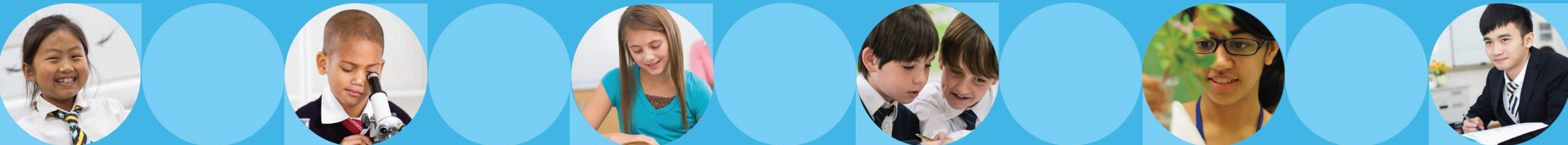
Macrosystem

Exosystem

Mesosystem

Microsystem
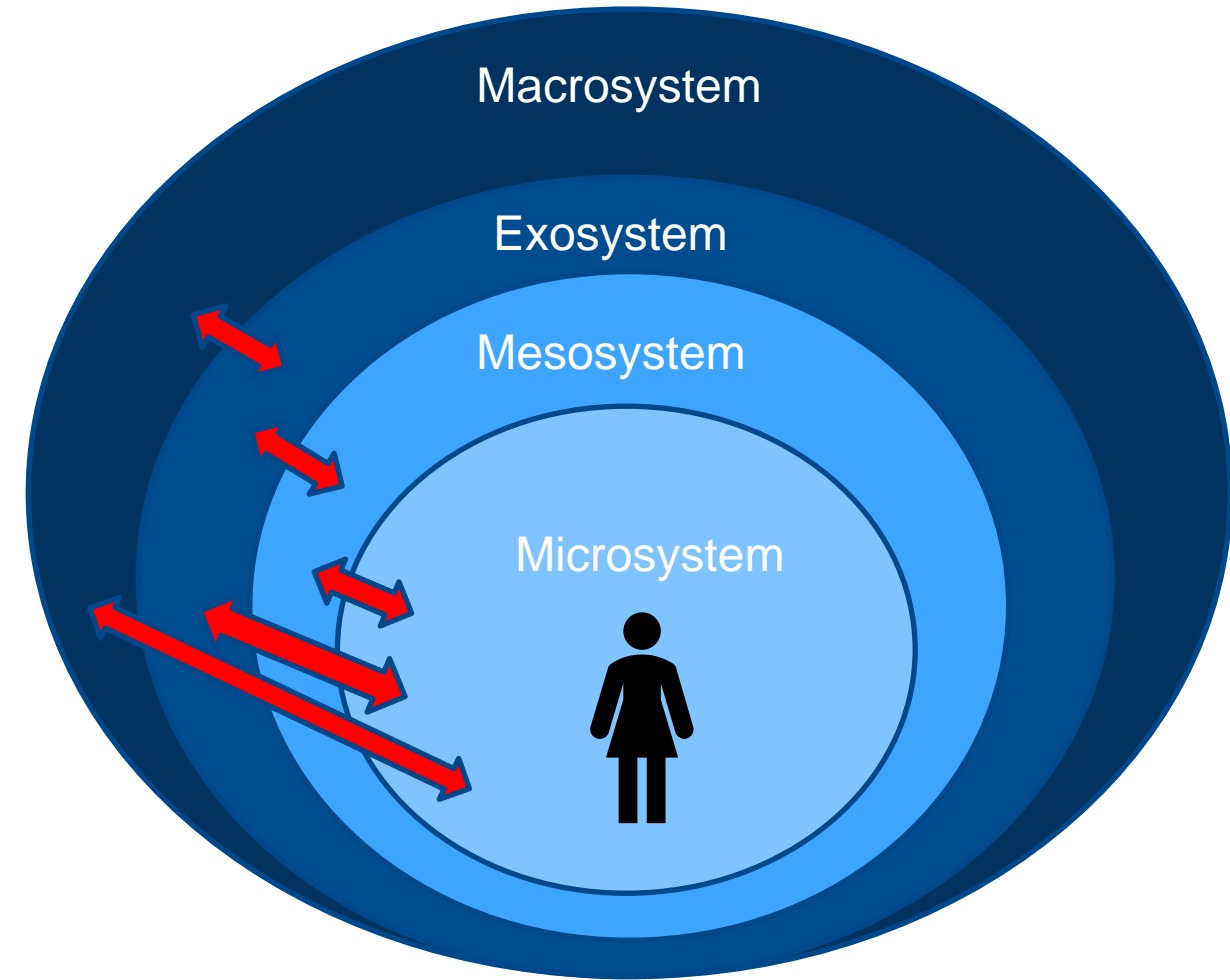
Social learning theory

▸ Behaviours are learnt from other people by observation and imitation (Bandura, 1977).

▸ Behaviours learnt in one social context can be transferred to a different social context.

▸ Thus, both, desirable and undesirable behaviours can be learnt from peers, teachers and family members.

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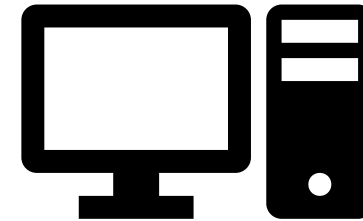# Behaviours that negatively impact a positive school climate

School bullying and cyberbullying

Bullying
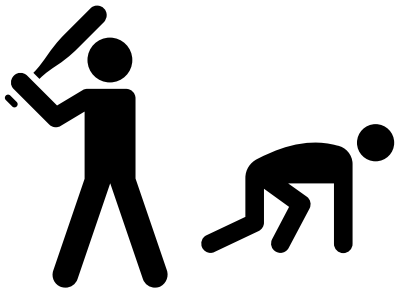
- Among peers
- Repeated
- Intentional
- Long-term
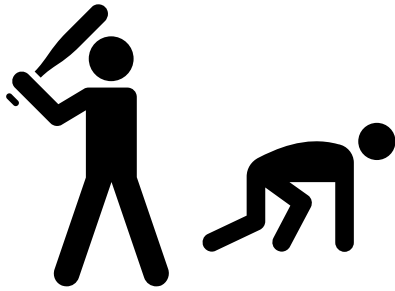- Defined roles
- Power imbalance

Cyberbullying

- Bullying using electronic devices
- Intentional
- Repeated (under debate)
- Perpetrated by known and unknown people
- In school and outside of school (24/7)
- Power imbalance (under debate)

Farrington (1993), Olweus (1978), Ortega-Ruiz (2010), Smith et al. (2008)

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School bullying and cyberbullying: examples

Bullying

- Verbal aggression such as name calling and insults
- Physical harm such as pushing, hitting and kicking
- Indirect aggression such as social exclusion or spreading rumours

- Harmful images or videos uploaded on social networking sites
- Insults through electronic devices
- Social exclusion in online groups
- Spreading rumours through electronic devices

Cyberbullying

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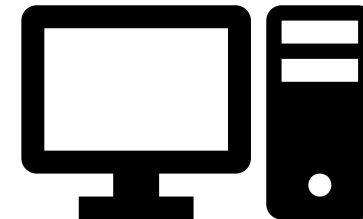
Teen dating-violence

▶ Physical, sexual or psychological aggressive behaviour displayed towards a dating partner in early romantic relationships among adolescents (CDC, 2019).

▶ For example:

  ▶ physical or verbal aggression towards the other person in the relationship

  ▶ insisting on having sexual relationships even if not wanted by the other person in the relationship

  ▶ gender-based discrimination and control over the other person in the relationship


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Discriminatory violence

▶ Discrimination of different minority groups, including ethnic-cultural minorities, sexual minorities, students with special needs, different socioeconomic status, etc. (Efus, 2017).

▶ For example:

  ▶ hate speech against certain individuals or groups

  ▶ cyberhate

  ▶ social exclusion related to the minority status

  ▶ physical or verbal aggression towards minorities

Are these behaviours common?

Bullying

Cyberbullying

Problem behaviours

Teen dating-violence
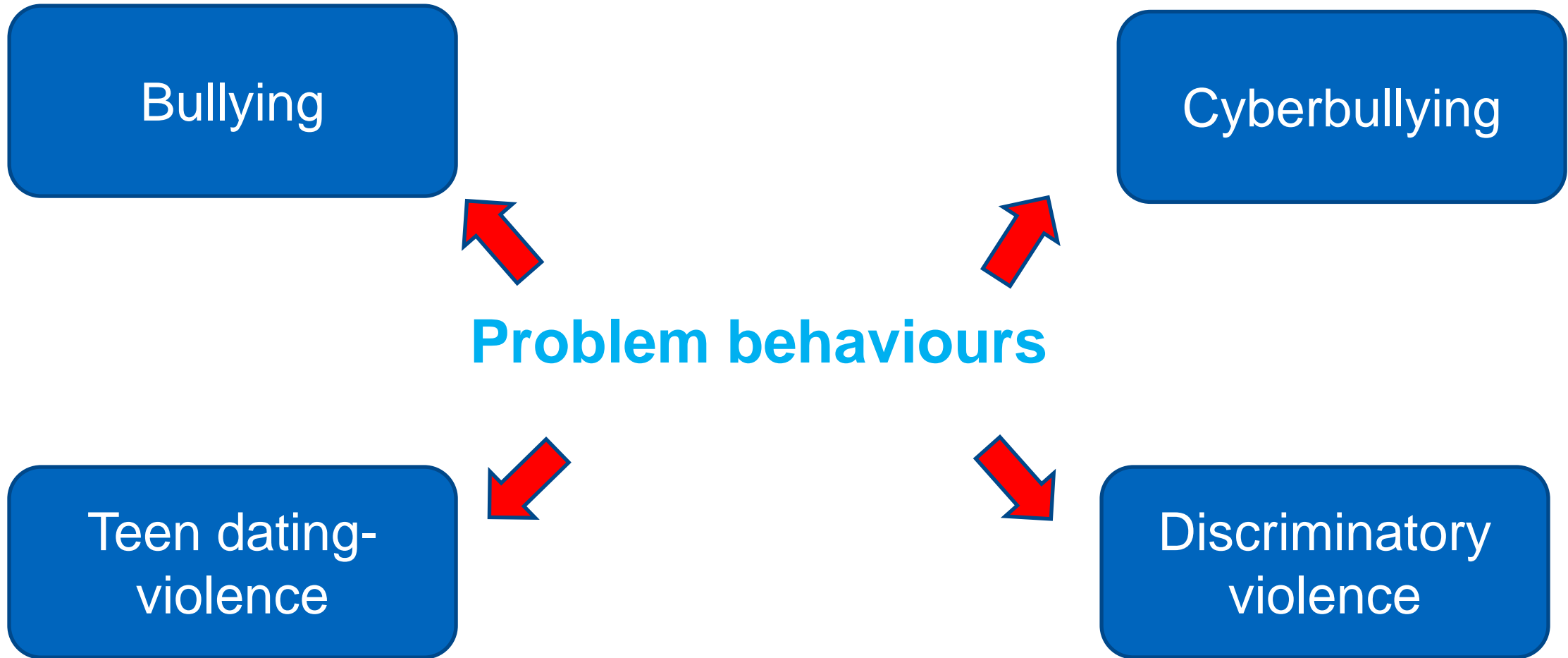
Discriminatory violence
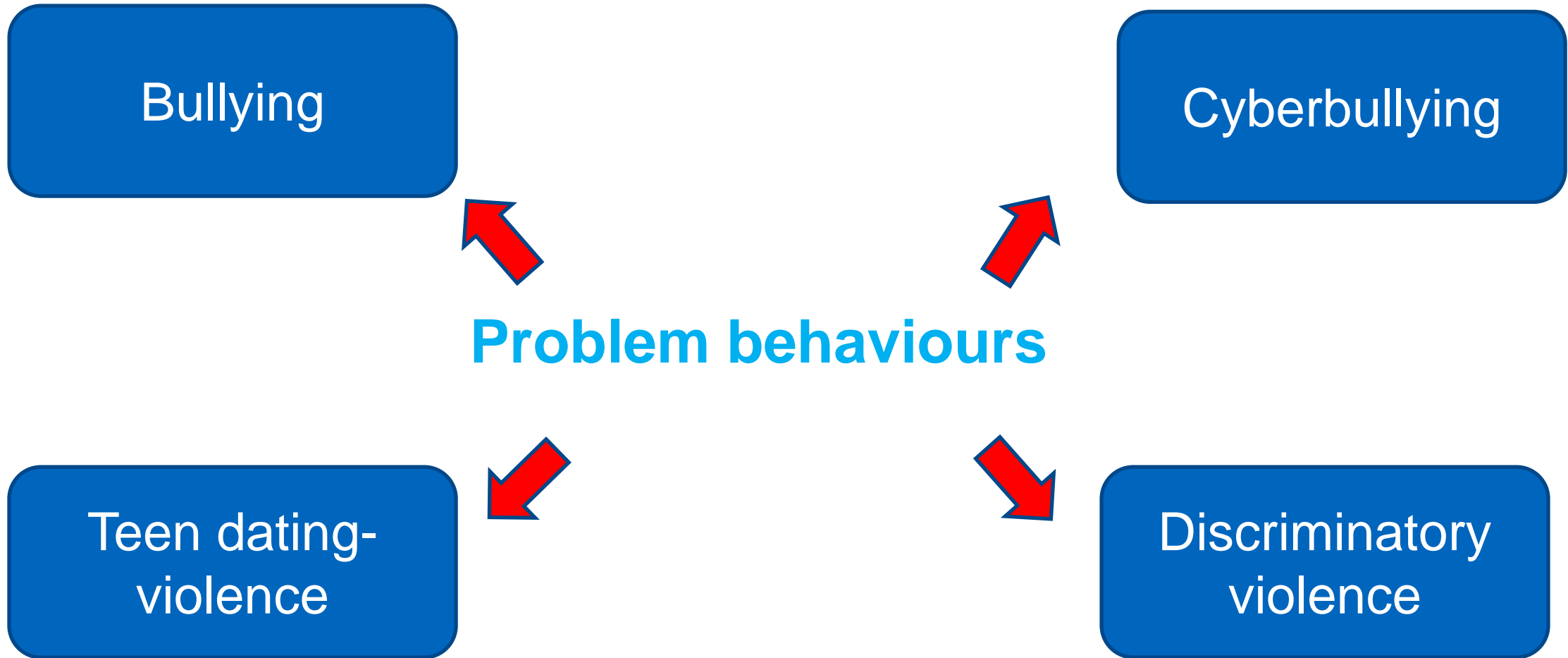
Are these behaviours common?

Bullying

A meta-analysis conducted by Modecki et al. (2014) with 80 empirical studies found that around 35% of students reported bullying perpetration and around 36% were victims.

Are these behaviours common?

Bullying

Cyberbullying

Problem behaviours

Teen dating-violence

Discriminatory violence

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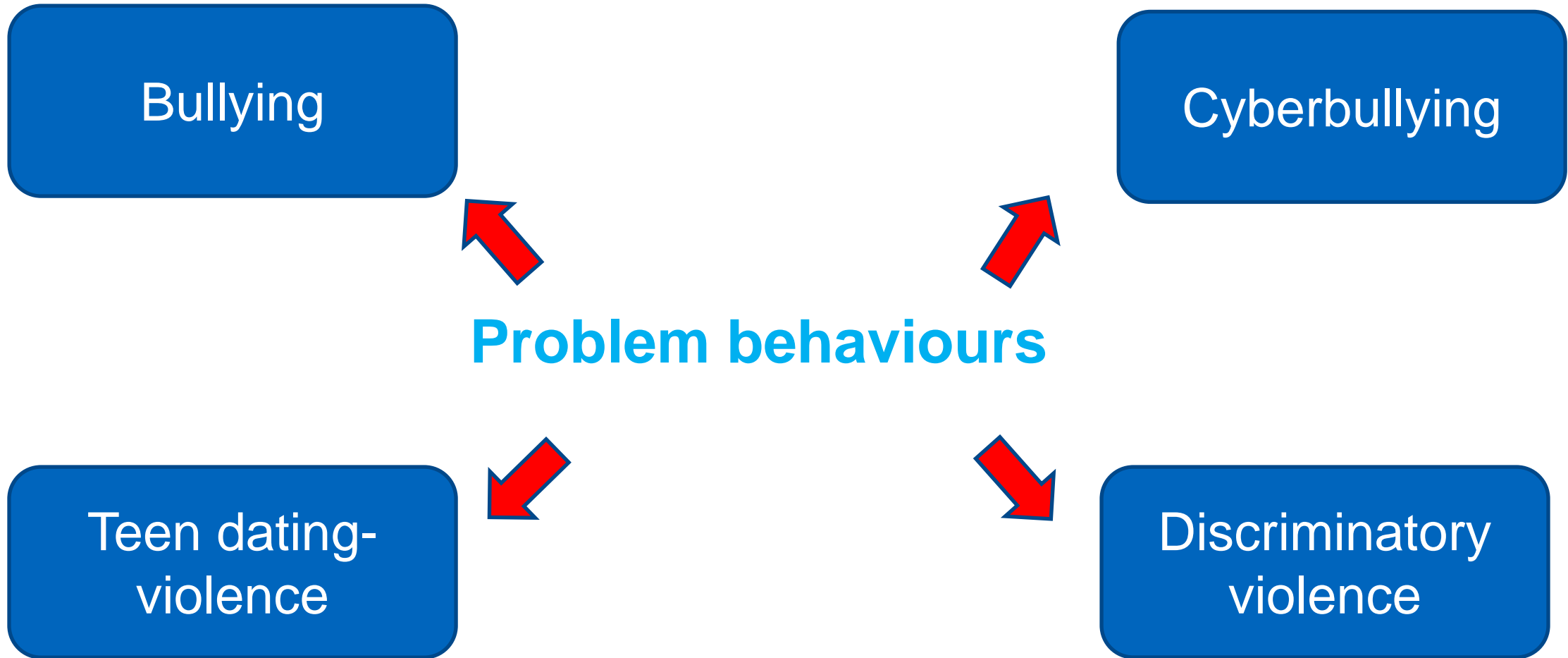International Education

Are these behaviours common?

Cyberbullying

Modecki et al. (2014) found that around 15% of students were involved in cyberbullying perpetration and around 16% were victims.

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Are these behaviours common?

Bullying

Cyberbullying

Problem behaviours
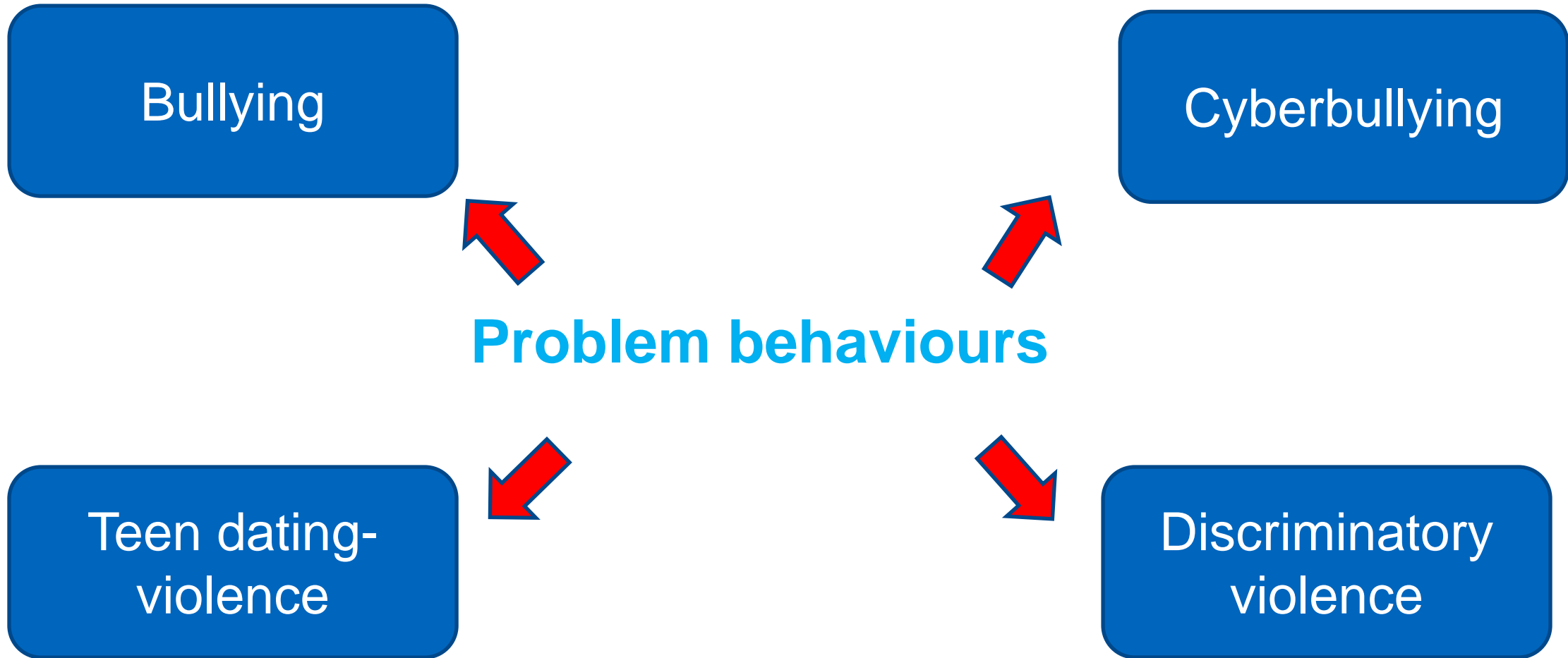
Teen dating-violence

Discriminatory violence

Are these behaviours common?

Teen dating-violence

Wincentak et al. (2017) conducted a meta-analysis based on 101 studies. They found that adolescents (aged 13 to 18) reported the 20% prevalence rates of physical dating-violence and the 9% prevalence rates of sexual dating violence.

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Are these behaviours common?

Bullying

Cyberbullying

Problem behaviours

Teen dating-violence

Discriminatory violence

Are these behaviours common?
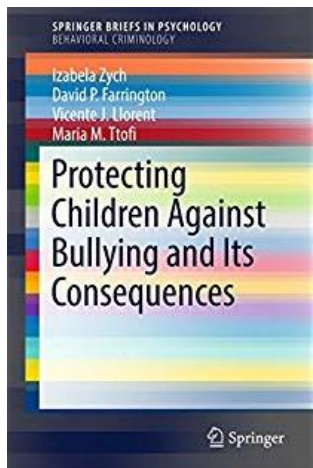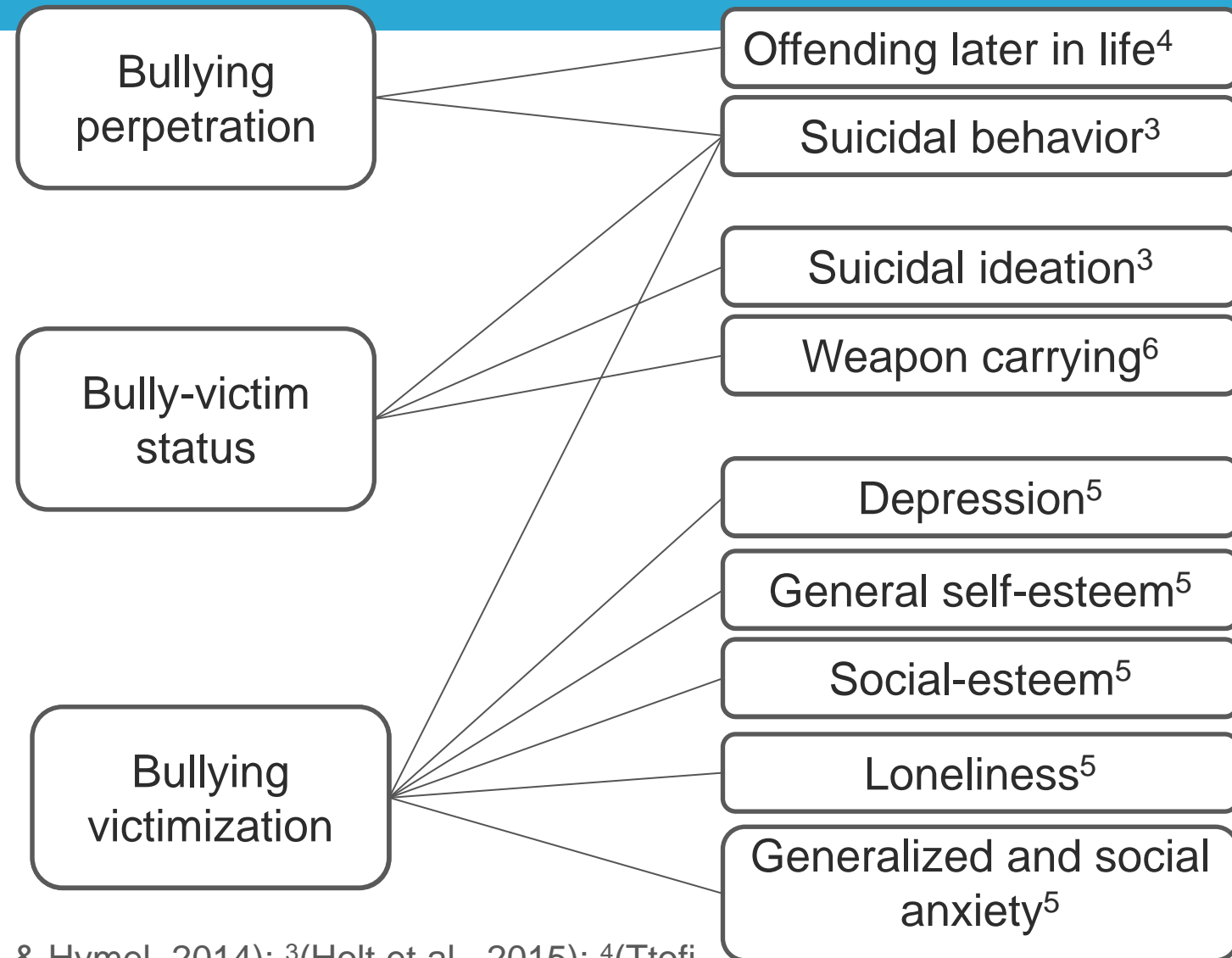
Discriminatory violence

Prevalence differs greatly among geographic areas and different types of discriminatory violence. For example, a six-country study conducted by Reichelmann et al. (2020) found that around 80% of young people have been exposed to cyberhate.

Are these behaviours common?

Bullying

Cyberbullying

Problem behaviours

Teen dating-violence

Discriminatory violence
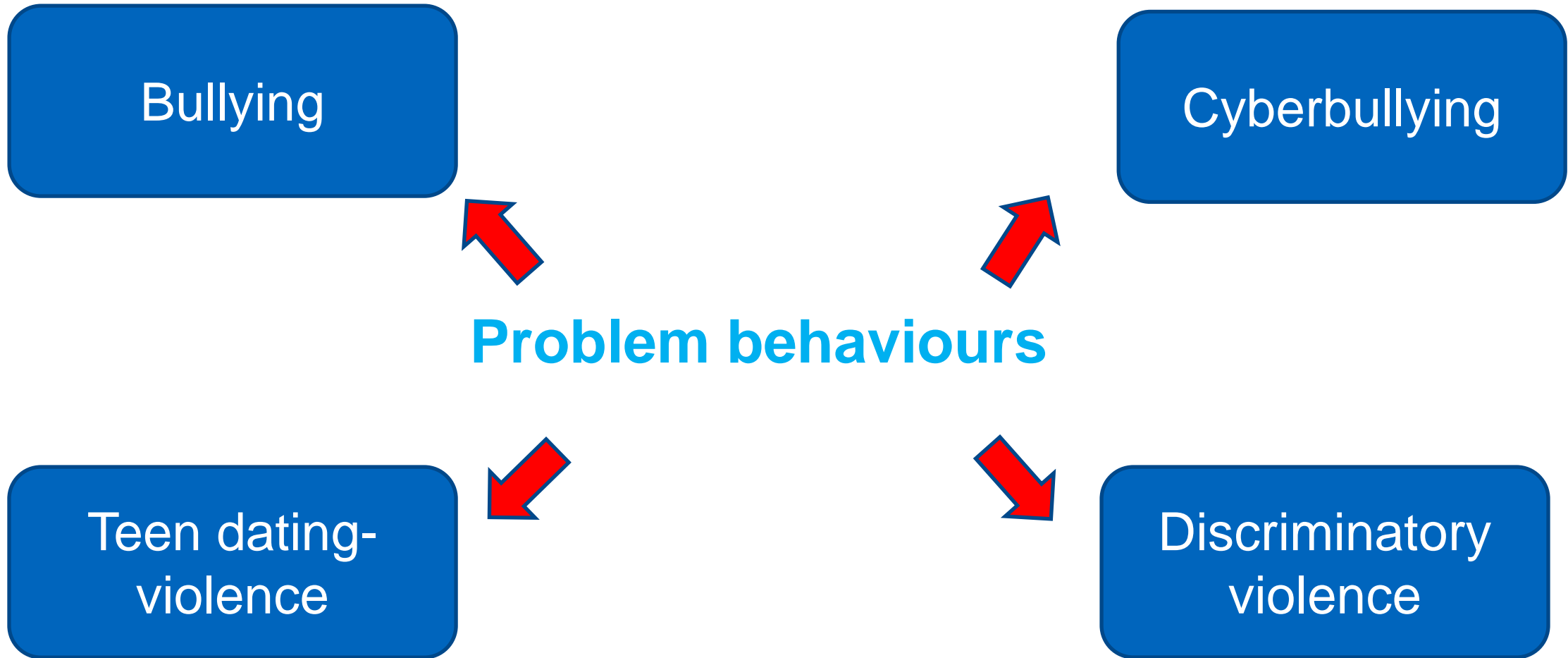
Why does it matter?

Involvement in any bullying role has some very serious short and long term consequences

Bullying perpetration

Bully-victim status

Bullying victimization

Offending later in life[4]

Suicidal behavior[3]

Suicidal ideation[3]

Weapon carrying[6]

Depression[5]

General self-esteem[5]

Social-esteem[5]

Loneliness[5]

Generalized and social anxiety[5]

[1](Cook, et al., 2010)[2](Gini, Pozzoli, & Hymel, 2014); [3](Holt et al., 2015); [4](Ttofi, Farrington, Losel, & Loeber, 2011); [5](Hawker & Boulton, 2000); [6](van Geel, Vedder, & Tanilon, 2014)

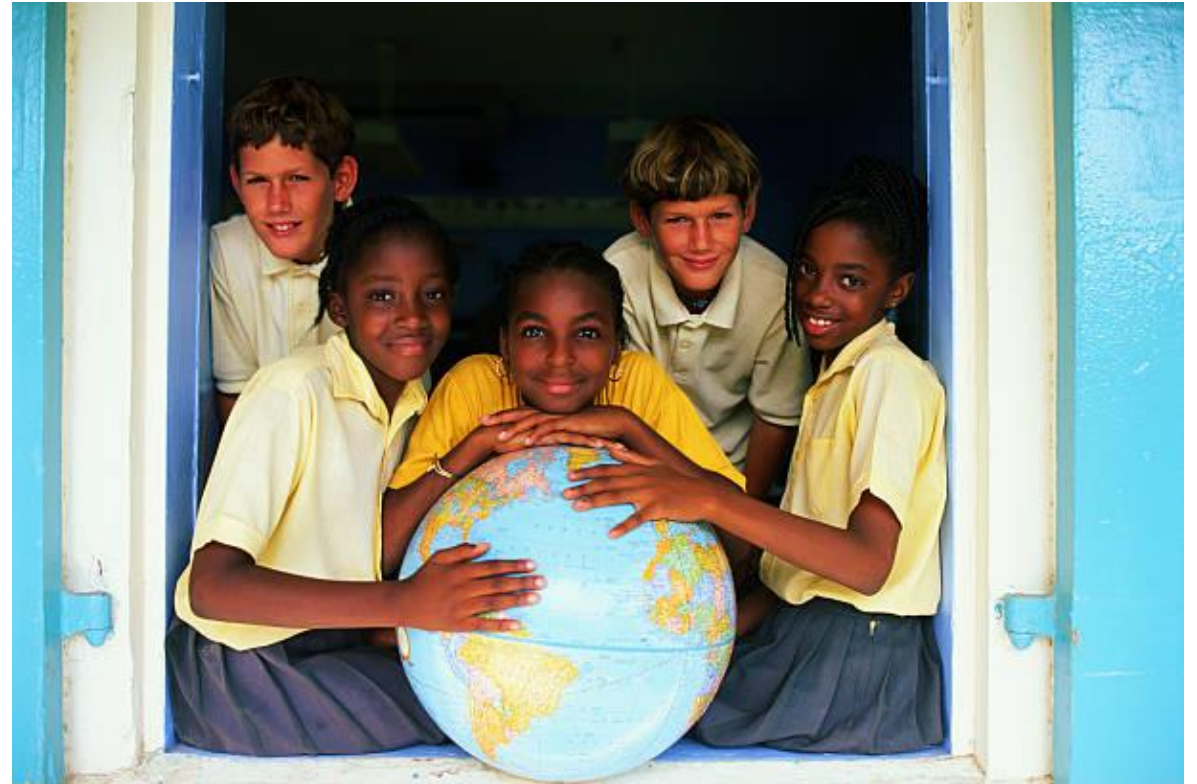# What can be done to promote a positive school climate?

Promoting a positive school climate

Based on the ecological theory, school climate can only be improved if it is approached from a **holistic, systemic and ecological perspective**. Different contexts need to be taken into account and a strong commitment is needed from all the members of the school community.

Promoting a positive school climate

Based on the social learning theory, teachers and school leaders need to act as models of desirable behaviour. What we say is important, but what we do is even more important.

School-based violence prevention programmes

Many programmes have been designed to prevent violence and delinquency in schools. Effective programmes usually focus on numerous risk and protective factors. Not all the programmes are the same. Effective programmes are based on scientific knowledge and applied to specific contexts.

Some components of the effective school-based violence prevention programmes

Social and emotional learning

Classroom management

Cooperative learning

Fostering sense of belonging to school

Support in academic tasks

Skills in solving interpersonal problems

Zych and Farrington (2019)

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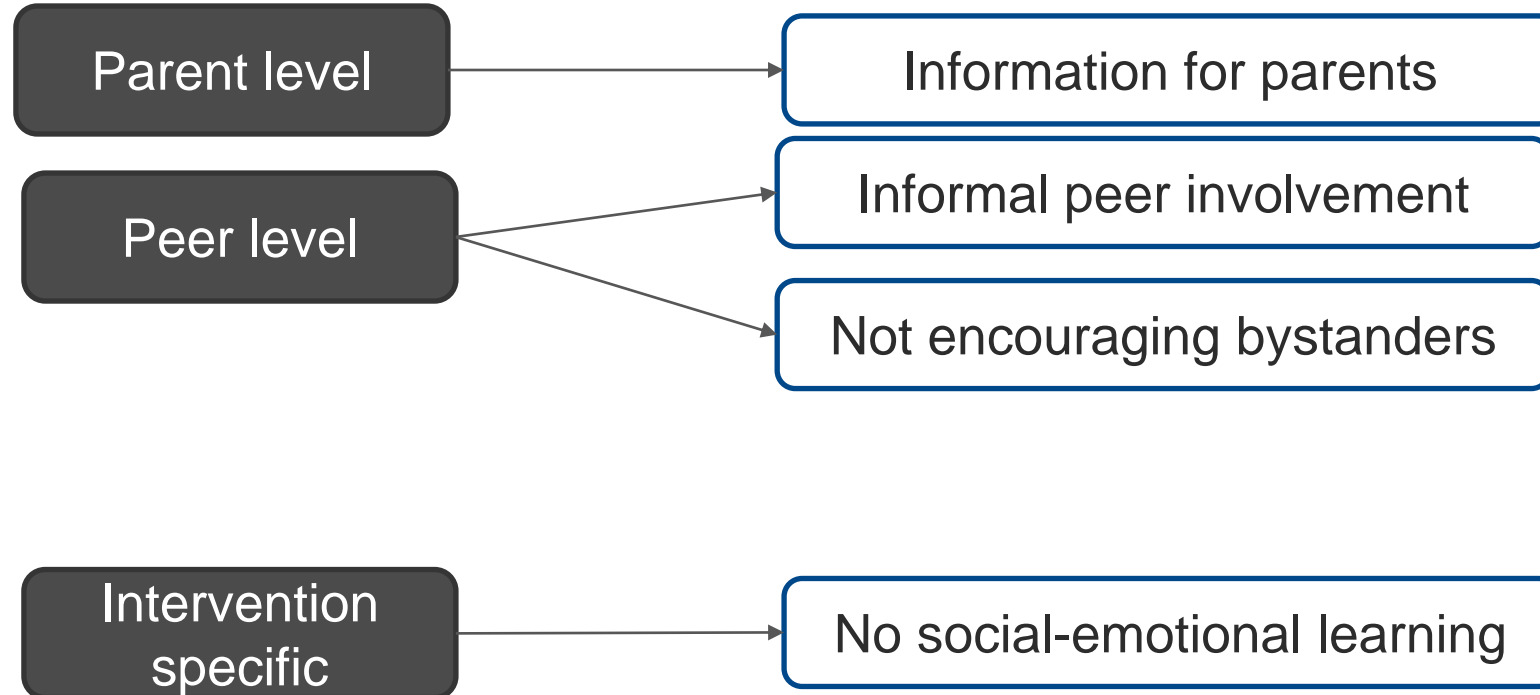
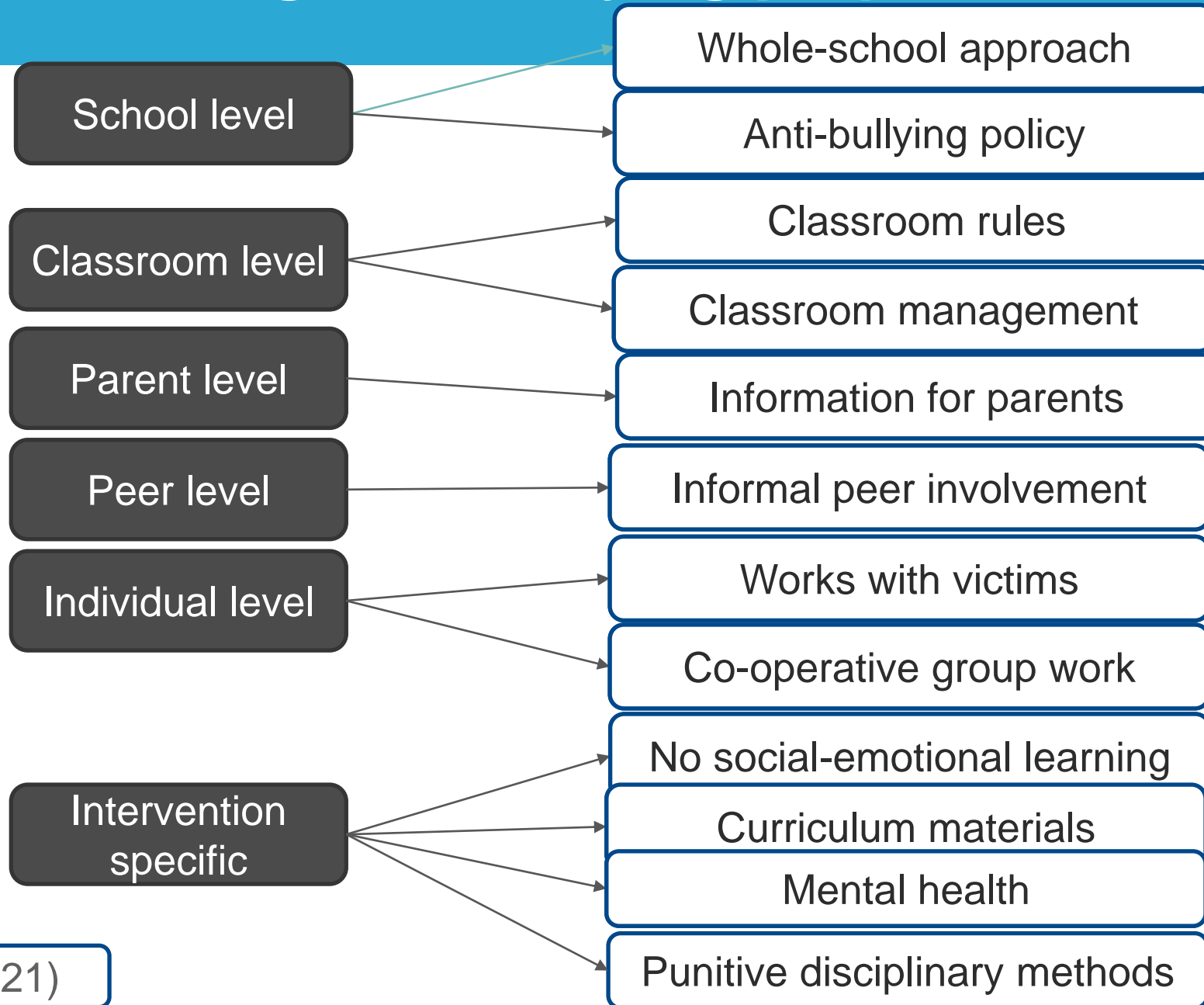# What works in bullying prevention?

A meta-analysis of anti-bullying programmes based on 100 studies from different parts of the world, conducted by Gaffney et al. (2021), found that anti-bullying programmes reduce perpetration by approximately 19–20% and school-bullying victimization by approximately 15–16%

What works best against bullying victimisation?

Parent level → Information for parents

Peer level → Informal peer involvement

Peer level → Not encouraging bystanders

Intervention specific → No social-emotional learning

Gaffney et al. (2021)

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What works best against bullying perpetration?

School level → Whole-school approach, Anti-bullying policy

Classroom level → Classroom rules, Classroom management

Parent level → Information for parents

Peer level → Informal peer involvement

Individual level → Works with victims, Co-operative group work

Intervention specific → No social-emotional learning, Curriculum materials, Mental health, Punitive disciplinary methods

Gaffney et al. (2021)

What works best against bullying perpetration?

School level

Classroom level

Parent level

Peer level

Individual level

Intervention specific

- A positive school climate should be promoted from a comprehensive, ecological and systemic approach.

- Different parts of the system need to be analysed and improved (e.g., individual characteristics, interpersonal relationships in school and outside of school, neighbourhoods)

- Teachers and school leaders should become models of prosocial and desirable behaviour
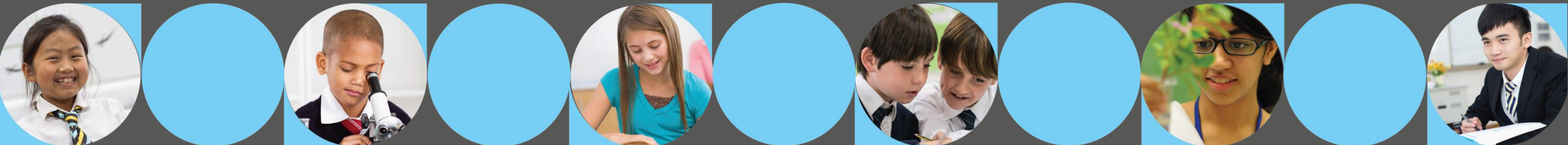
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Thank you
Any questions?

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