Introduction

- Research suggests that bullying is a widespread among school-age children and adolescents in the United States. Studies find that approximately 10-20% of students report victimization and 8-18% reported bullying others (Sweater, Collins, Fluke & Stratton, 2012).
- Involvement in the bullying dynamic negatively impacts the emotional, psychological, and physical well-being of school-aged children and adolescents (Forster, Dyal, Baezconde-Garbanati, Choa, Soto, & Unger, 2013; Peguer, 2009; Peguer & Williams, 2011).
- When bullying is racially motivated, it can further exacerbate the physical and emotional health of targets (Rosenthal et al., 2013).
- Research has found significant differences in the way students of color are disciplined. Recent reports from the United States Government Accountability Office (2018) found that there are discipline disparities for black students.
- Skiba and colleagues (2011) examined differences in disciplinary practices for minor misbehaviors and found that Black and Hispanic students were more likely to be disciplined for minor misbehaviors than their Caucasian peers.

Methods

- The current sample consists of school-age students referred to a Tier III bullying intervention program (n = 212).
- The intervention program is assessment-driven and utilizes various measures to gather information from the participants regarding internalizing symptoms (e.g., depressive and anxious symptoms) and cognitive distortions.
- This study is part of a larger study with youth involved in bullying from ages 6-18 years old. Data collection for this took place from 2005 to 2018 with the Target Bullying Intervention Program (T-BIP; Sweater, 2005).
- Demographic and office referral data were collected from schools.
- Participants were asked about their experiences as a victim, bystander, and as a perpetrator of bullying using The Bully Survey Student Version (BYS; Sweater, 2001).
- Results were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Results

- Differences in the frequency of office referrals and referrals to a Tier-III bullying intervention program were examined.
- Black/African American = 21, Latino/Hispanic = 20, Asian American = 1, Native American = 10, Middle Eastern = 2, Biracial =36, others = 9 were compared to White students.
- Results revealed that students of color were not disproportionally referred to a Tier III intervention.
- Results also demonstrate representation in a Tier III intervention as proportional to the ethnic minority populations in a midwestern city.
- Top reasons students referred to a Tier III intervention were examined (Insubordination/Disrespect= 14, bullying=17).
- Top reasons of color were referred to a Tier III intervention were examined (Insubordination/Disrespect= 11, bullying= 9, threats/harassment= 5).

Discussion

- The most frequent reasons students were referred to a Tier III intervention may not be valid for a Tier III referral.
- Behaviors such as insubordination/disrespect/verbal abuse were the most common reasons for a Tier III intervention. However, it may be more effective to address these less severe behaviors within the classroom or a less intensive intervention.
- Among ethnic minorities, the most common reason students were referred to a Tier III intervention was insubordination/disrespect, this was higher than White students.
- The primary method of analysis for this study was office referral data. It must be taken into consideration that office referrals are made at the discretion of the classroom teacher. For this reason, it is very likely some behaviors were not reported at all or reported inconsistently.

For Educators

- For students who demonstrate behaviors such as class disruption or disrespect, a Tier II intervention may be more efficacious.
- Other strategies like addressing the student’s behavior in class instead of referring to office may be more useful.
- For more severe behaviors, a good strategy may involve assessment, psychoeducation, and therapy. For more information about an Tier III bullying intervention visit: https://cehs.unl.edu/empowerment

Racial Disparities in Referrals to an Individualized Bullying Intervention Program
Cesar Torres, B.A., Guadalupe Gutierrez, M.A., & Susan M. Sweater, Ph.D., LP

https://cehs.unl.edu/empowerment

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34 Reasons Why Students Perpetrate and are Victims of Bullying: Implications for Intervention


https://cehs.unl.edu/empowerment/

Introduction

Many students are involved in the bullying dynamic in some capacity, with approximately 10-20% of students reporting victimization and 8-18% of students reporting bullying others (Swearer, Collins, Fluke, & Strawn, 2012).

The consequences of involvement in bullying can be serious for all involved but are most severe for those involved as perpetrators and victims (bully-victims) and can include short- and long-term negative behavioral, mental health, and social outcomes (Swearer et al., 2001; Toff, et al., 2001).

Research finds that bully-victims tend to have lower levels of parental support than perpetrators and non-involved students (Demeranet & Van Houtte, 2012), which may contribute to the negative social, health, and mental health outcomes.

With such serious consequences linked with bullying involvement, understanding the reasons students report bullying others and getting bullied is important for both prevention and intervention.

Swearer et al. (2001) assessed a sample of Australian school children and found an association between self-reports of perpetrating bullying and negative attitudes towards victims. The present study builds upon these findings and further examines responses from students who reported being bully-victims, parents’ responses on why they thought their child was involved in bullying, and the impact on their social and emotional adjustment.

Method

The present study’s sample consists of 128 school-age students (2nd-10th grade, 58.6% male, M = 11.45 years) referred to a Tier-I bullying intervention program for their involvement in bullying as perpetrators and/or victims.

A total of 95 parents (80.3% female, 13.7% male) identified their children as bully-victims. The Bully Survey – Student Version (BYS-S; Swearer, 2001)

• The BYS-S is a four part (i.e., A, B, C, D) 46 item, self-reported survey that assesses students’ experiences and perceptions of bullying as a perpetrator, victim, and bystander.

• The BYS-S has been validated using office referral data; students who perpetrate bullying have a higher percentage of office referrals followed by bully-victims (Maye, 2005; Swearer & Cory, 2005).

• Within the survey there is a list of 34 reasons why students perpetrate bullying and are bullied from which they can select.

The Bully Survey – Parent Version (BYS-P; Swearer, 2001)

• The BYS-P is a three part (i.e., A, B, C) 33 item, self-reported survey that assess their children’s experiences with bullying as perpetrators or/victims, and their own attitudes towards bullying.

• Within the survey, parents can select multiple options from a list of 34 reasons why their child perpetrates bullying or/and is being bullied.

• After the intervention, the student, their guardians, teachers, and the interventionist meet to discuss assessment results and further recommendations.

Results

4.7%

3.8%

5.4%

20.3%

6.8%

White

Black/African American or Latino

Asian American

Eastern European

Middle Eastern

Native American

Hispanic Other

54.7%

Student’s Race

• Depressive & anxious symptoms

• Cognitive distortions

• Self-perception

• Empathic skills

• School climate

• Video or virtual reality experience depicting bullying scenarios

• Bully Dance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4K02OxmV3-b

• Stories of Us: http://www.storiesofus.com/home.html

• Virtual Reality: https://harmonylabs.org/vr-action-lab/

• Discussion of reasons why kids bully, consequences for all involved

• Psychoeducational PowerPoint

• Role-Play

• Cognitive Behavioral Strategies

• Bully Busters Worksheets

• Social Skills Instruction

• SODAS Problem-Solving Instruction

• Emotion Regulation Instruction (e.g., Zones of Regulation, casel.org)

Debriefing/Questioning: Students are asked why they think bullying is a joke.

Cognitive distortions

Emotion

Social Skills

Role-Play

Psychoeducation

Assessment

Psychotherapy

Therapy

Debriefing/Questioning: Students are asked why they think bullying is a joke.

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS REPORTING THEIR CHILDREN EXPERIENCES WITH BULLYING AS PERPETRATORS OR/VICTIMS.

Reasons for Bullying

1. Other
2. (s)he is a wimp
3. The clothes (s)he wears
4. (s)he is different
5. (s)he is too short
6. (s)he gets angry a lot
7. (s)he cries a lot
8. (s)he can’t get along with other people
9. Their friends are weird
10. (s)he gets bad grades

Reasons for Being Bullied

1. I am different
2. They are a wimp
3. The clothes I wear
4. I get angry a lot
5. They think I’m fat
6. Other
7. They think my friends are weird
8. They think my face looks funny
9. I can’t get along with other people
10. The way I talk

Intervention Components

• Depressive & anxious symptoms

• Cognitive distortions

• Self-perception

• Empathic skills

• School climate

• Video or virtual reality experience depicting bullying scenarios

• Bully Dance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4K02OxmV3-b

• Stories of Us: http://www.storiesofus.com/home.html

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• Role-Play

• Cognitive Behavioral Strategies

• Bully Busters Worksheets

• Social Skills Instruction

• SODAS Problem-Solving Instruction

• Emotion Regulation Instruction (e.g., Zones of Regulation, casel.org)

Reasons for Bullying

1. Other
2. They are different
3. They can’t get along with other people
4. They get angry a lot
5. The clothes they wear

Reasons for Being Bullied

1. Other
2. They get angry a lot
3. The clothes they wear
4. They are different
5. They are fat

Implications

• These results are consistent with Rigby (2005)’s findings in that characteristics of victims are often cited as the main reason for perpetrating bullying behavior or/and being bullied.

• Additionally, the most frequently cited main reason for perpetrating bullying was the victim doing something mean. This is likely associated with the finding that most participants identified as bully-victims.

• This is consistent with parents’ self-reported main reason for their child’s bullying was revenge. Interestingly, parents reported that the reasons for their child being bullied were lack of social skills, they had a quality that the perpetrator did not like, and revenge.

• These reasons support the idea of individualizing bullying interventions in a school setting. A student who perpetrates bullying because they are seeking revenge may respond better to problem-solving instruction, whereas a student who is perpetrating bullying because the victim has a quality they do not like (e.g., they are annoying or “wimpy”) may benefit from interventions that promote empathic skills.

• Understanding parents’ perspectives and beliefs on the reasons their children get involved in the bullying dynamic as perpetrators or/victims is important because it provides some context on how the family cultural context, values, beliefs, and disciplinary actions may influence their children’ behavior.

REASON

Perpetrator thought bullying was a joke

To seek revenge

Perpetrator felt angry

INTRODUCTION

Promotion of empathic skills

Social Skills Instruction, Role-Play

Problem-solving instruction, Assertive Communication

Promotion of emotion regulation

Empowerment Initiative

Developmental • Neuroscience • Translational

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Coping strategies are a combination of cognitive and behavioral patterns that are used to reduce distressing consequences after experiencing adverse life events.

According to the transactional coping paradigm, an individual’s success in coping with an adverse event is dependent on a variety of interpersonal and situational contexts (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Bullying victimization is considered an adverse life event that is experienced by 10% to 33% of students (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

Bullying victimization is associated with greater internalizing problems (i.e., anxious or depressive symptoms), and implicates the need for adaptive coping strategies (Malecki et al., 2015).

Purpose: To examine the interpersonal and situational factors that impact an individual’s perceived ability to cope.

The data included in the present study are part of an international study examining the supports that youth and young adults need for building resilience and mental wellness.

The present study includes youth and young adults (n = 1,952) who completed the Born Brave Experiences survey between May 2016 and March 2017 using the Qualtrics online platform.

Measures & Results

Verbal and Physical Bullying Scale (VBPS; Swearer, 2008)

This is a 13-item scale assessing verbal and physical bullying. All items are scored on a 5-point scale (“never happened” to “always happened”). \( \alpha = .87 \)

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (PSS; Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988)

This is a 8-item self-report measure designed to measure perceived social support from family, friends, and significant others. All items are scored on a 7-point scale (very strongly disagree” to “very strongly agree”). \( \alpha = .88 \)

Brief Resilient Coping Scale (BRCS; Sinclair & Wallston, 2004)

This is a 4-item uni-dimensional outcome measure designed to assess adaptive coping. All items are scored on a 5-point scale. \( \alpha = .73 \)

Results

Youth who reported victimization once-a-month reported significantly higher levels of coping (\( F(2,700) = 3.30, p < .05 \)) and social support (\( F(2,673) = 11.08, p < .01 \)) compared to once-a-week or daily.

The interaction of gender and victimization frequency on the level of perceived coping is statistically significant (\( F(2,594) = 3.76, p < .05 \)), meaning that males tended to report lower levels of coping.

A statistical model which combined bullying victimization frequency, gender, and perceived social support significantly predicted perceived coping levels (\( F(3,1197) = 32.88, p < .01 \), with an \( R^2 \) of .08 for the entire sample.

Discussion

School-based professionals and mental health practitioners must consider the negative impacts of repeated bullying victimization experiences when supporting youth. The negative outcomes of repeated victimization may be buffered by strong support networks and coping.

The interaction effects revealed, that male participants varied widely in reported coping. Males victimized once-a-week reported significantly lower levels of perceived coping, and may represent a unique group for targeted intervention.

Individuals’ perceptions of their ability to cope with adverse life events, like bullying, may impact healthy coping. Thus, coping is an important social-emotional skill to actively teach to youth and young adults.
Bullying is a pervasive problem which causes harm to victims through a variety of behaviors (e.g., physical contact, verbal assault, social exclusion, and cyberbullying). Bullying is defined as engaging in repeated negative actions intentionally designed to inflict harm to individuals who are unable to defend themselves (Olweus, 1993).

Limited research has been conducted exploring the relationship between youth and young adults’ altruism and bullying behavior. Altruism is defined as a form of unconditional kindness without the expectation of receiving anything in return (Hung et al., 2011).

Altruism has been associated with higher prosocial behaviors (Bieroff, 2002), lower levels of aggression (Jones et al., 2011), and lower bully perpetration among a sample of Swedish children (ages 9 to 13) (Thornberg and Wåström, 2018).

The cross-sectional study described in this poster session is designed to understand the relationship between U.S. youth and young adult’s altruism and their reported bullying perpetration.

It was hypothesized that participants who reported having higher levels of altruism would report fewer experiences of bullying perpetration.

### Methods

**Procedures**
- This study is part of a larger, ongoing international study with youth and young adults ages 13-25 years-old.
- Data collection took place between May 2016 and March 2017 using the Qualtrics online platform.

**Participants**
- 1,178 youth (ages 13 - 18) and 4,154 young adults (ages 19 – 25) completed the Born Brave Experiences 3.0 survey. Inclusion criteria: Participants (ages 13 -25) from the United States (n = 852) who completed questions about their involvement in bullying and a measure on altruism. Participants had a mean age of 20.09 (SD = 3.23), with 69.8% identifying as Caucasian and 57.5% identifying as female.

**Measures**
- Participants’ altruism was measured using a 14-item scale which was adapted from the Altruism Scale (Rushton, 1981). Utilizing a five-point scale (“never” to “very often”), participants were asked questions such as “I would allow someone I did not know to go in front of me in line.” to “I would help a classmate who I did not know well with a homework assignment when my knowledge was greater than his or hers.” Internal consistency for the Altruism Scale was .91.
- Bully perpetration was reported on the Verbal and Physical Bullying Scale (VPBS; Swearer, 2008). The VPBS is a 26-item scale (i.e., 13-items victimization and 13-items bullying perpetration) that assesses both verbal and physical bullying. All items are scored on a 5-point scale (“never happened” to “always happened”). Example of items assessing bullying perpetration include “I made fun of other kids,” and “I pushed and shoved others.” Internal consistency for the VPBS – Bully Perpetration was .80.

### Results

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare endorsed levels of altruism between bully perpetrators and non-bully perpetrators. There was a significant difference in the altruism scores for bully perpetrators (M = 36.58, SD = 10.74) and non-bully perpetrators (M = 39.85, SD = 10.94); t(850) = -2.46, p < .001.

A linear regression explored the relationship between participant’s total altruism score on self-reported bullying perpetration. Results revealed a significant relationship between participant’s total altruism score and their reported bullying perpetration, (F(1,72) = 9.28, p < .005), with an R² of 0.11.

### Discussion

- Consistent with our hypothesis, we found that participants who bullied others endorsed lower levels of altruism.
- On average, participants who endorsed bullying perpetration endorsed lower levels of altruism when compared to participants who did not report bullying others.
- Our findings suggest that efforts to increase individual’s altruism may be an effective way to reduce bullying perpetration.

### Limitations

- Since this study utilized a cross-sectional design, we cannot assume a temporal relationship between altruism and bullying perpetration since both variables were simultaneously assessed.
- The participants in the current study were predominantly Caucasian, female, young adults. The results may not reflect a more diverse population accurately.

### Implications for Mental Health & School Professionals

It is important for mental health and school professionals to increase the use of kindness interventions for students, promoting kinder schools and lower levels of bullying perpetration. The following are kindness interventions that can be used in a classroom:
- http://BornThisWayFoundation/- Sign up to get involved with BTWF and learn more about how you can help build a kinder, braver world.
- **Kindness Cards** - Kindness cards are a great and easy way to show kindness for people in your class and school.
- **Secret Agents of Kindness** - A kindness intervention where students are asked to be secret agents in their school to help spread kindness.
- **Random Acts of Kindness Classroom Curriculum** - Become a Raktivist (Short for “Random Acts of Kindness activist”) with Random Acts of Kindness and gain access to their classroom curriculum focused around kindness! They have a downloadable curriculum for students in kindergarten to high school.