



Interpersonal and Situational Factors Impact Perceived Coping with Bullying

Cody Solesbee, M.A., Raul A. Palacios, M.A., & Susan M. Swearer, Ph.D.
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Introduction

- 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.*

Method

- 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. $\alpha = .73$

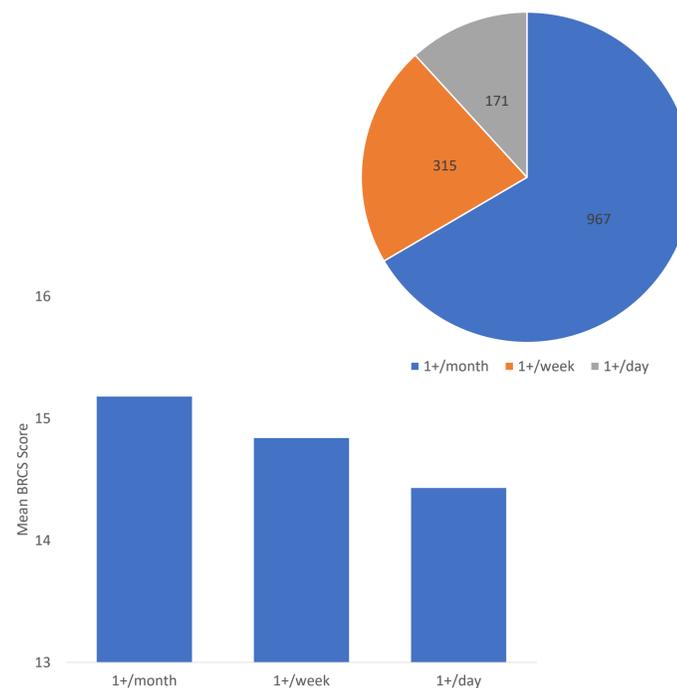


Figure 1. Self-reported bullying victimization frequency from the VBPS

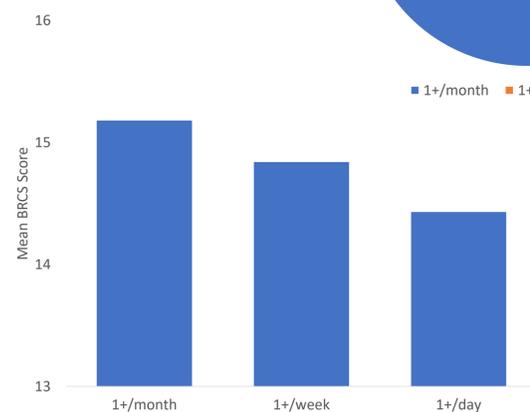


Figure 2. Perceived levels of coping based on bullying victimization frequency.

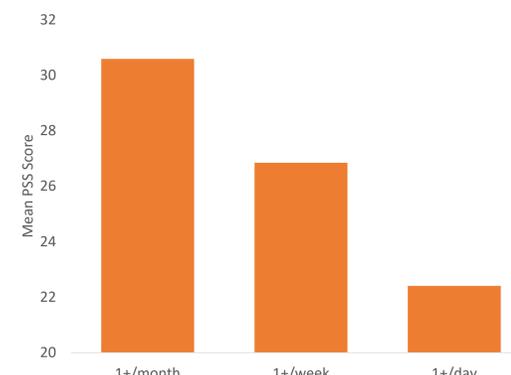


Figure 3. Perceived levels of social support based on bullying victimization frequency.

Table 1
Predictors of Self-Perceived Coping

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
BV Frequency	.01	.14	.01	.05	.96
Gender	-.65	.20	-.09	-3.30	.00
Social Support	.06	.01	.26	9.07	.00

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.