Adolescent Bullying: The Impact of Self-Efficacy, Social Support and Moral Disengagement on Prosocial Intervening

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Adolescent youth exposed to bullying remain at a heightened risk of developing mental health related issues, have a lower quality of life and in extreme cases, engage in suicidal behaviour (Mishna, Pepler, Cook, Craig & Wiener, 2010; Stuart & Jose; Kim & Leventhal, 2008). Educators, practitioners and researchers have all diligently attempted to reduce the prevalence of bullying in the adolescent population by developing intervention strategies (Vreeman & Aaron, 2007). Successful anti-bullying strategies typically encourage youth to intervene upon witnessing bullying (Vreeman & Aaron, 2007). This has been labelled in the research as prosocial intervening (PI). Several factors have been associated with PI, including perceived social support, moral engagement, life satisfaction and gender (Hymel, Rockefeller-Henderson & Bonanno, 2005; Hertz, Donato & Wright, 2013).

School districts were invited to participate in a bullying victimization, perpetration and bystander survey as part of a larger study exploring healthy teen behaviours (see; Crooks, Scott, Broll, Zwarych, Hughes, & Wolfe, 2015). Students from fifty-seven schools across rural and urban Saskatchewan participated in this study.

One thousand and fifty seven Canadian students, averaging the age of 13, participated in a self-report survey measuring a range of attitudes and characteristics that might be predictive of PI behaviour. Approximately 80% of the participants were grade 8 students. The remainder of the data was collected from grade 6, grade 7 and grade 9 students. The majority of participants were Caucasian (67.6%), followed by First Nations, Inuit, Metis (15.9%) and Asian (7.7%). The remainder of participants self-identified as Arab, African and Hispanic. 618 students resided in urban neighbourhoods while 439 resided in rural neighbourhoods. 51.7% of students identified as Male, 47.4% identified as Female, while the remainder of the sample chose not to disclose their gender.

A generalized linear model was produced to examine if moral disengagement, life satisfaction, self-efficacy and social support were associated with PI. Results indicated that social support, moral disengagement and gender predicted PI behaviour. Life satisfaction was removed from the model due to multicollinearity. Self-efficacy did not uniquely predict PI in participants. Females were more likely than their male counterparts to participate in PI behaviour.

Consistent with these results, it is recommended that educators explore social emotional programming that targets moral disengagement in youth as a way to increase PI behaviour. There are several limitations restricting the usability of this research due to the quasi-experimental structure of the study design. To address this limitation, future research should utilize longitudinal methodologies.

**REFERENCES**


