Are Young Adolescents’ Social and Emotional Skills Protective Against Involvement in Bullying and Violence?

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Data Source

- Sample from Lead Peace demonstration study in 4 K-8 schools in the Minneapolis Public School District with similar, ethnically diverse and economically disadvantaged student bodies.
- Data from Lead Peace T2 survey, completed at the end of the 6th/start of 7th grade.
- Survey instruments included questions about violence involvement, bullying behaviors, emotional and social skills.

Study Sample

- 171 students
- Mean age = 12.1 years
- 52% female; 48% male
- Majority were African American (42.7%), Asian (28.1%), mixed race (15.2%) or Latino (12.3%)

Measures

Outcome Variables

Violence Involvement (Y/N) contrasted students reporting violence in past year including having used or threatened to use a weapon, hurting someone badly enough to require bandages/medical attention, or having been involved in a fight more than once vs. those who reported none of these behaviors.

Physical Bullying

- 3-item scale, \( r=0.80 \)
- Example item: During the past week, how many times did you hit, shove, or push someone?

Relational Aggression

- 8-item scale, \( r=0.82 \)
- Example item: During the past week, how many times did you spread rumors or gossip about someone?

Independent Variables

Emotional and social skills measures from Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory Youth Version (EQi:YV):

- Intrapersonal Skills: 2-item composite, \( r=0.55 \)
  - Example item: It is easy to tell people how I feel.

- Interpersonal Skills: 5-item scale, \( r=0.60 \)
  - Example item: I care what happens to other people.

- Stress Management Skills: 3-item scale, \( r=0.70 \)
  - Example item: I get too upset about things.

Analytic Methods

Multivariate analyses employed EQi measures that had significant bivariate relationships with outcome variables (\( p<.05 \)).

- Multivariate logistic regression to model violence involvement
- Multivariate linear regression to model bullying outcomes

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Social-Emotional Skills</th>
<th>b (SE)</th>
<th>z</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intrapersonal Skills</td>
<td>(-1.74^* (0.46))</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Skills</td>
<td>(-0.64* (0.28))</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress Management Skills</td>
<td>(-0.84 (0.39))</td>
<td>-2.18</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Multivariate logistic regression model controlled for gender, race/ethnicity & timing of survey
† Multivariate linear regression model controlled for gender, race/ethnicity & timing of survey

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Discussion

- Interpersonal skills and stress management skills functioned as significant protective factors associated with lower odds of violence involvement and lower risk of bullying behavior.
- Findings illustrate possible mechanisms as to why interventions that build young people’s emotional and social skills may be effective in reducing bullying and violence.

Acknowledgements