



Racial and Religious Based Bullying is Associated with Increased Depression and Isolation in Students

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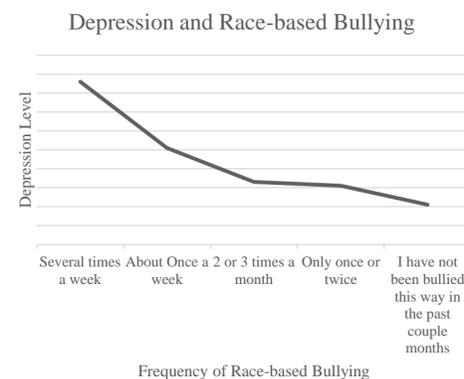
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Background Information

- BACKGROUND/PURPOSE:** Despite consistent efforts to reduce bullying, students continue to suffer negative consequences because of bullying experiences, including negative impacts on their mental health. Discrimination, microaggressions and racially-motivated school violence continue to be major concerns for school stakeholders. While some have explored the connections between microaggressions and bullying, further attention is warranted to understand student experiences of bullying, microaggressions and their mental health. The purpose of the current study was to explore the relationships between different types of bullying (general, race-based, and religion-based), student race/ethnicity, religion, and depression.
- METHODS:** Data from the U.S. Health Behaviors in School-Aged Children survey (HBSC), 2009-2010 was utilized in the current study. The sample (n= 12, 642) composed of 51.4% males and 48.6% females. Students included in the study ranged from grades 5 to 10 and the average age of participants was between 12 and 13 years old. Race identification categories included: Hispanic, Two or more races, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, White, and Black or African-American (see Table 1). An Independent-samples T-Test was used to examine how gender and depression interact. A One-way ANOVA test was used in examining the relationship between grade and depression, race and depression, and the three types of bullying focused on in this study and depression. Multiple Chi-square tests were used to explore the relationships between gender and how much students felt accepted by their peers (peer acceptance); grade and peer acceptance; race and the three types of bullying; gender and the three types of bullying; and the three types of bullying and peer acceptance.

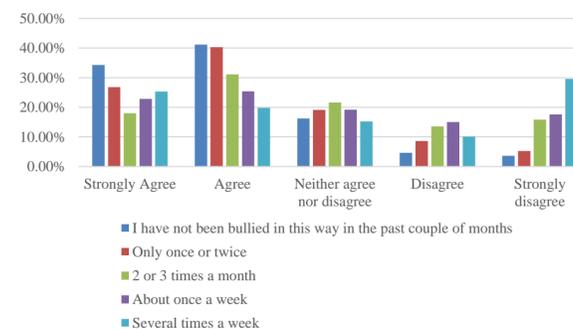
	f	%
Gender		
Male	6502	51.4
Female	6136	48.6
Grade in School		
Grade 5	1717	13.6
Grade 6	2050	16.2
Grade 7	2421	19.2
Grade 8	2475	19.6
Grade 9	2072	16.4
Grade 10	1907	15.1
Race		
Black or African-American	2164	17.9
White	5903	48.8
Asian	469	3.9
American Indian or Alaska Native	222	1.8
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	111	.9
Two or More Races	828	6.8
Hispanic	2392	19.8
	M	SD
Age	12.95	1.75



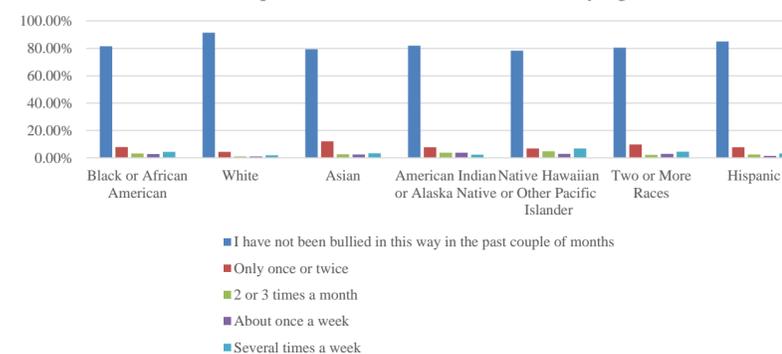
Results

- An ANOVA analysis revealed that students who reported that they had not experienced bullying in the past couple of months experienced significantly lower levels of depression (M = 3.94, SD = .96) than students once or twice, 2 or 3 times a month, about once a week, and students who reported being bullied several times a week (M = 3.58, SD = 1.02; M = 3.35, SD = 1.14; M = 3.23, SD = 1.08; M = 3.09, SD = 1.21).
- Students that reported that they had not been bullied for their race/color in the past couple months reported lower levels of depression (M = 3.86, SD = .98) than those who reported experiencing this kind of bullying 2 or 3 times a month, those who experienced this about once a week, and those who reported several times a week (M = 3.51, SD = 1.01; M = 3.33, SD = 1.12; M = 3.31, SD = 1.12; M = 3.21, SD = 1.22).
- Students who had not experienced religion-based bullying in the past couple months had significantly lower depression scores (M = 3.84, SD = .99) compared to those that reported experiencing bullying based on their religion only once or twice, 2 or 3 times a month, about once a week, and several times a week (M = 3.46, SD = 1.13; M = 3.44, SD = 1.06; M = 3.41, SD = 1.21; M = 3.32, SD = 1.16).
- The multiple Chi-square analyses revealed that all form of bullying decreases peer acceptance among students, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander and American Indian or Alaska Native students are targets of bullying based on religion more often than the other groups in the study. While comparing groups, results indicated that Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander students (9.8%) were more likely to experience at least one instance of race-based bullying per week when compared to their peers. American Indian or Alaska Native students (8.3%), multi-racial students (7.4%), and Black students (7.2%) also experience higher instances of bullying based on their race compared to Asian students (5.9%), Hispanic students (4.7%), and white students (3.1%).

Chi-square for Race-based bullying and Peer acceptance



Chi-square for Race and Race-based bullying



Conclusion

- Experiencing bullying of any kind has been shown to increase depression in students and decrease how accepted they feel by their peers.
- Results also show that ethnicity plays an important role in bullying experiences. Black, multi-racial, and American Indian or Alaska Native students reported greater levels of depression – this suggests that race is an important variable in the understanding of bullying in schools. Microaggressions and racially- or religiously-motivated bullying represent a potential escalation of negative effects for students.
- Experiences of bullying appears to decrease as students mature, however, depression levels increase.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy:

Currently there is not federal legislation in the U.S. to address bullying in schools across the nation; however, current and previous study have shown that there is a need to address bullying as it is such as prevalent issue with negative effects on students mental health and academic performance. Taking into consideration current findings from surveys completed by students in multiple states, there is a need for all schools to not only be aware of bullying, but to have plans in place to prevent and address bullying and assist students in discussing these issues. Students should be educated on the effects of bullying and discrimination, and have programs they can access for support.

Practice:

Social workers can be found in a variety of settings and many will interact with children or adults who's childhood experiences have deeply affected them. Providers should understand how race- or religion-based bullying can lead to increased depression in children and how minority students identity impacts their experiences of bullying.

Future Research:

Further research on how children's mental health is affected by experienced microaggressions could help professionals better understand how to assist them to create a more positive learning environment and improve their outcomes for learning and a healthy lifestyle. Also, how often does bullying based on race or religion occur in schools, maybe even looking into all levels (Pre-school to college/university). How often do students of all ages experience this kind of bullying or microaggressions. Is there a difference between the two at different educational levels? Further research can help explain how one's identity impacts their mental health, school experience, and academic performance. As mentioned above, experiences of bullying decreased as the students matured but their depression levels increase; future studies could investigate what other variables are causing depression to increase.

Literature Review

BULLYING

- The definition of bullying can vary depending on the region, but most individuals would agree that bullying includes threatening, harassment or actual violence between peers of unequal power (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014; Shelley et al., 2017; Volk et al., 2014).
- In the United States there, approximately a third of students in 6th to 10th grade have been involved in bullying (Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007).

MICROAGGRESSION CONNECTION

- Race does have an effect on how bullying is experienced and perceived differentially by individuals of different racial and ethnic backgrounds in the United States (Connell, Sayed, Gonzalez, & Shell-Busey, 2015; Fox & Stallworth, 2005; Swearer Napolitano, 2011). Prior studies have found that students from different race/ethnic groups experience and perceive bullying differently. White and Asian students were found to perceive greater experiences of bullying, but actual experiences were more common among Black students.
- This would suggest that those who do not experience racially motivated bullying are more sensitive to experiences of discrimination, while those who frequently have these experiences have normalized their victimization. It also points out that Black and Latino students are more often specifically targeted as victims of bullying due to their racial and ethnic identities.

EFFECT ON MENTAL HEALTH

- Studies done in multiple countries indicate that bullying is a risk factor and predictor for developing a mental illness, health issues and maladaptive coping behaviors (Aoki et al., 2000; Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Rantanen, & Rimpela, 2000; Reijntjes, Kamphuis, Prinzie, & Telch, 2010; Rosenthal, Earnshaw, Carroll-Scott, Henderson, Peters, McCaslin, & Ickovics, 2015). Bullying victims learn to internalize their problems compared to their non-bully counterparts which leads to the development of such disorders like depression and anxiety, eating disorders, and psychosomatic symptoms (Reijntjes et al., 2015).

Resources

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