



Examining long term effects of bullying: How does social support contribute to current resilience and recurrent memories of bullying?

1. Introduction

- Bullying affects up to a half of children (Young Minds, 2014), and has short and long term consequences including depressive symptoms, anxiety and low self worth (Hawker & Boulton, 2000).
- Exposure to traumatic stressful events such as bullying can lead to unpleasant recurrent memories and intrusive imagery about the experience (Sansen et al., 2015).
- Research on bullying effects has mainly been orientated towards the cause and characteristics of problematic outcomes, and fails to adequately understand why not all victims of bullying are affected in the same way, and what factors may curb psychological and physiological harm from bullying.
- Social support, for example, is a protective factor when exposed to trauma (Agaibi, 2005) and increased resilience is sometimes the product of stressful life events (Bogar & Hulse-Kilacky, 2006).
- This research aims to examine the relationships between retrospective accounts of bullying at school and amount of social support available when at school, with experiences of recurrent unpleasant memories of bullying and current levels of resilience.

2. Method

- 86 participants (51 female) completed the following measures:
- Adapted version of the Retrospective Bullying questionnaire (RBQ) (Schafer et al., 2004) measuring bullying frequency at secondary school, and recent unpleasant recurrent memories of these experiences
- Abbreviated version of the Two-way Social Support Scale (2-Way SSS) (Shakespeare-Finch & Obst, 2011) to measure the social support received at secondary school
- The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC, Connor & Davidson, 2003) to measure their current resilience to life events.

3. Findings

- Mediation analysis indicated that social support was a statistically significant mediator between bullying frequency and resilience whereby frequently bullied participants were more resilient if they received greater social support during secondary school.
- Social support was not a significant mediator between bullying frequency and recurrent memories, but there was a significant negative relationship between resilience and recurrent memories ($r = -.22, p < .05$), meaning that those who had greater resilience had lower reports of recurrent memories.

Fig 1: Regression coefficients between bullying frequency, social support and resilience

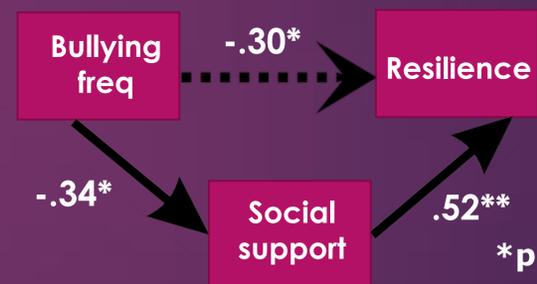
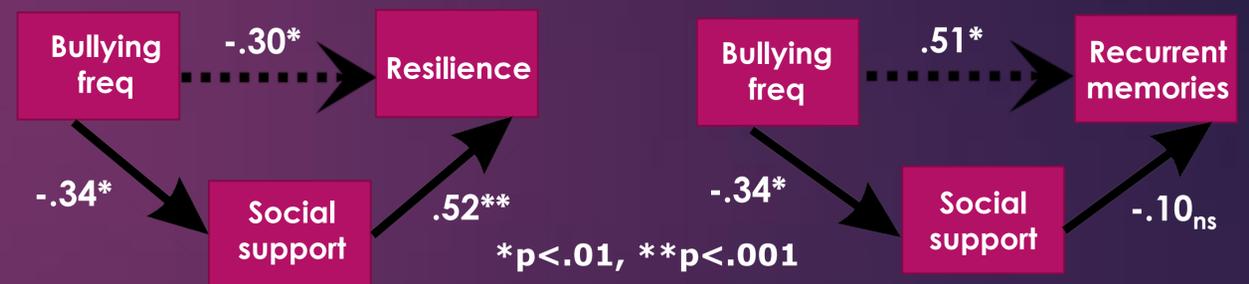


Fig 2: Regression coefficients between bullying frequency, social support and recurrent memories



4. Implications and Conclusion

- Approaches must be adopted to promote social support for individuals from a young age (e.g. family involvement, school counsellors, peer support) in order to build resilience
- Being resilient may curb psychological harm from bullying, resulting in fewer recurrent memories of the experiences later in life
- Some individuals are still affected by bullying. More research must examine these effects, and what characteristics and support may mediate this relationship and promote resilience.