Target Bullying Intervention Program

Overview

The Target Bullying Intervention Program (T-BIP) is an individualized 1:1 intervention for students who bully others. The T-BIP was developed in 2005 and started in the Lincoln Public Schools as a research project to assess the intervention's efficacy and to examine the correlates and consequences of bullying behaviors. A unique component of the T-BIP is the cognitive-behavioral assessment phase, which helps to identify the cognitive processes and mental health factors associated with bullying. In this phase, the interventionist assesses constructs related to engagement in bullying (e.g., depression, anxiety, cognitive distortions, self-concept, and perceptions of school climate). The student's parents and teacher also evaluate the acceptability of the program. Research is ongoing; however, several preliminary analyses have been published or presented at national conferences, including the National Association of School Psychologists, the American Psychological Association, and the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies.

What We've Learned About Correlates of Bullying:

- Student perceptions of positive school climate significantly predict negative attitudes toward bullying, suggesting that more favorable perceptions of school climate predict more negative views toward bullying behaviors.[1]
- Students who experience victimization in schools with positive climates may experience more detrimental effects due to dissonance between their personal experiences and their school environment (i.e., the healthy context paradox). This finding underscores the need to continue supporting youth victimized even in schools with positive climates.[2]
- Traditional discipline practices and school climate do not vary by bullying role (e.g., bully, victim). When students receive more traditional discipline practices, they are more likely to report a negative school climate, regardless of their bullying role.[3]
- Higher rates of traditional discipline and a student-perceived bullying problem significantly predict lower student perceptions of school climate. These results replicate previous findings that traditional discipline practices are related to a negative school climate.[3]
- Youth who identify as pure bullies endorse greater cognitive distortions compared to other roles (e.g., pure victim, bully-victim, bystander). These results are consistent with cognitive-behavioral approaches, demonstrating that cognition is an essential factor to consider when intervening with youth involved in bullying.[4]

- Youth who identify as victims and victim-bystanders report higher levels of personal distress empathy (i.e., experiencing emotional dysregulation when observing the misfortune of others) compared to youth who identify as bullies.[5]
- Students who endorsed moderately high or high levels of personal distress have higher levels of anxious symptoms compared to students with lower levels of personal distress. These findings suggest that some forms of affective empathy may be less adaptive and are likely to differ across bullying roles.[5]
- Students, parents, and teachers demonstrate high disagreement regarding the bullying role of the student. This supports the collaborative model of the T-BIP to improve communication regarding the student's experiences.[6]
- The most common primary reason for bullying others reported by students as the victim was "doing something mean." This finding is consistent with most T-BIP participants identifying as bully-victims and supports the individualization of a bullying intervention, given the unique circumstances of each student.[7]

What We've Learned About the Impact of the T-BIP:

- Cognitive distortions decrease for most participants following the T-BIP intervention; however, this relationship is stronger for participants who endorse elevated callous-unemotional traits. These findings support the efficacy of the T-BIP in addressing underlying cognitions influencing bullying behaviors and demonstrate that students with elevated callous-unemotional traits benefit from individualized, targeted interventions.[8]
- Students in general and special education endorse excellent treatment acceptability; however, students identified with a specific learning disability report significantly lower acceptability of the T-BIP. This may be related to the reading and assessment components of the intervention and can be supported by providing additional time.[9]
- Early in implementing the T-BIP, students completed weekly questionnaires to evaluate the sustainability of the intervention's outcomes over time. These results demonstrate that most students did not bully others after completing the T-BIP.[10]
- Most parents (47.1%) of the parents who completed the treatment evaluation survey rated the T-BIP as "very acceptable" for their general reaction to this intervention, and 37.1% of the parents rated the T-BIP as "very acceptable" for the student's problem behavior.[11]
- Teachers (47.8%) rated the T-BIP as "very acceptable" for their general reaction to this intervention, and 44.7% rated the T-BIP as "very acceptable" for the students' problem behavior.[11]
- Office referrals and the suspension length were reduced following participation in the T-BIP. These findings suggest that the T-BIP effectively reduces the frequency of suspension, increases the time students spend at school, and decreases instances of bullying.[11,12]

Citations

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