

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPATHY, MORAL DISENGAGEMENT AND BYSTANDER BEHAVIORS IN SCHOOL

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Abstract

The current study will examine the relationship between empathy, moral disengagement and bystander behaviors in school bullying. It is hypothesized that (1) Empathy will likely to positively predict defender behavior while negatively predict reinforce behavior and outsider behavior of the students and (2) Moral disengagement will likely to negatively predict defender behavior while positively predict reinforce behavior and outsider behavior of the students. Sample will be comprised of 100 students which will be selected through convenient sampling from different public and private schools of Lahore. Data will be collected by using Toronto empathy questionnaire (Spreng et al., 2009), Moral disengagement in bullying scale (Thornberg&Jungert, 2014)and extended version of Student bystander behavior scale (Thornberg&Jungert, 2014).After computing descriptive statistics of the data and reliability analysis for each scale, Pearson Product Moment correlation will be used to assess the relationships between study variables while hierarchical regression analysis will be used to assess the hypotheses of prediction.

Keywords:

Empathy, Moral disengagement, Bystnder behavior ,school bulling ,prevention

Introduction

The bystander effect, or bystander apathy, is a social psychological claim that individuals are less likely to offer help to a victim when other people are present; the greater the number of bystanders, the less likely it is that one of them will help. Several factors contribute to the bystander effect, including ambiguity, group cohesiveness, and diffusion of responsibility that reinforces mutual denial of a situation's severity. Purpose of this research is to study the relationship between empathy, moral disengagement and bystander behaviours in school bullying. Empathy is the ability to comprehend another's emotional state (Hogan, 1969) as well as the ability to react to the experiences of others (Davis, 1983).

Decay and Jackson described three functional components of empathy which dynamically interact to produce the experience of empathy. First, affective component, which includes sharing emotions; second, the awareness of self and the other with specific mechanisms for differentiate between the two, and third, cognitive component including understanding others perspective. Moral disengagement is a term from social psychology for the process of convincing the self that ethical standards do not apply to oneself in a particular context.

This is done by separating moral reactions from inhumane conduct and disabling the mechanism of self-condemnation (Fiske & Susan, 2004). Moral disengagement involves a process of cognitive re-construing or re-framing of destructive behavior as being morally acceptable without changing the behavior or the moral standards (Bandura, 1999). This concept of bystander was popularized after the 1964 killing of Kitty Genovese in New York City, giving rise to the term, "Genovese Syndrome". The term bystander effect was coined in 1969 by John Darley and Bibb Latane to refer to the effect of certain social pressures on emergency responses in people.

The bystander effect, also called bystander apathy, is a term in psychology that refers to the tendency of people to take no action in an emergency situation when there are others present. This phenomenon is highly studied in the field of sociology.

Literature Review

The bystander effect, or bystander empathy, is a social psychological claim that individuals are less likely to offer help to a victim when other people are present; the greater the number of bystanders, the less likely it is that one of them will help. Several factors contribute to the bystander effect, including ambiguity, group cohesiveness, and diffusion of responsibility that reinforces mutual denial of a situation's severity. Purpose of this research is to study the relationship between empathy, moral disengagement and bystander behaviours in school bullying. This chapter include the researches that have been conducted to reveal the relationship among empathy, moral disengagement and bystander behavior in school bullying. following is the review of international literature incorporating the main study.

Empathy is a large predictor of defending, or active bystander behaviors in bullying situations, as demonstrated by numerous studies (Caravita et al., 2009; Correia & Dalbert, 2008; Gini et al., 2007; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2011; Nickerson et al., 2008; Nickerson & Mele-Taylor, 2014; Polyhonen et al., 2010).

Gini and colleagues (2007) conducted a study to determine if empathy predicts defending and bullying behaviors. In a sample of 318 adolescents, they found that low levels of empathetic responsiveness was significantly correlated with bullying behaviors in boys. That is, not only do defenders have high levels of cognitive empathy or perspective-taking, they also have high levels of empathic responsiveness. Prior research had suggested that empathy guides defending in girls but not boys, however, this study showed otherwise. Sogren, Thornberg, Wanstrom and Gini (2020) conducted a study to explore the relationship of moral disengagement, defender self-efficacy and student teacher relationship with bystander behavior in peer victimization. The result revealed that moral disengagement was moderately positively correlated with reinforcement behaviour, weakly positively correlated with outsider behaviour, and weakly negatively correlated with defender behaviour.

Objective of the Study

To assess the relationship between empathy, moral disengagement and bystander behavior in school bullying.

Hypotheses

- Empathy is likely to have a positive relationship with defender behavior while negative relationship with reinforcement behavior and outsider behavior of the students.
- Moral disengagement is likely to have a negative relationship with defender behavior while positive relationship with reinforcement behavior and outsider behavior of the students.

- Empathy will likely to positively predict defender behavior while negatively predict reinforce behavior and outsider behavior of the students

Methodology

Research Design

In this research, correlation research design will be used. This research will be examining the relationship between empathy, moral disengagement and bystander behavior in school bullying.

Sample The sample will be consisting of N=100 school students. Data will be collected from schools through convenient sampling. Sample will be drawn based on following inclusion exclusion criteria.

Sample Criteria

- Students from 7th to 10th class will be included
- Both boys and girls will be included.
- Students from both government and private schools will be included. Students with any physical and mental disability will not be included.

Assessment Protocol

Demographic information sheet: Demographic variables i.e. age, gender, class, parents' education, parents' occupation, family system (nuclear, joint), residential area (urban, rural), school (public, private) will be included.

Tool translation Piloting will be done with 10 participants after considering the inclusion and exclusion criteria to determine whether the questionnaires are comprehensible and easy to understand in English language. All the tools will be translated into Urdu language if the items seemed to be misunderstood by the participants or if they seemed to have problems understanding the items in the original English version.

Procedure

Permission from principal of the college and authors of the scales will be acquired. Permission to collect the data will be acquired from all the relevant authorities of schools. After explaining the nature and aim of the research, participants will be identified based on inclusion and exclusion criteria and informed consent will be taken from them. They will be assured that their data will be kept confidential. All the queries will be catered. After the data collection, participants will be thanked for their corporation.

Proposed Statistical Analysis

The SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 20.0 will be used to analyze the data. After computing descriptive statistics of the data and reliability analysis for each scale, Pearson Product Moment correlation will be used to assess the relationships while hypotheses of prediction will be assessed through hierarchical regression.

Results This chapter include reliability analysis for scales and analysis of the hypothesis stated earlier. Descriptive analysis were computed for demographic variables, relationship between Empathy, Moral disengagement and bystander behaviors in school bullying. Pearson conduct the moment correlation was used to explore the relationship among the study variable that include Empathy, Moral Disengagement and Bystander Behaviors in School Bullying. Bullying behavior through hierarchical was used to investigate the bystander bullying behavior relationship with empathy moral disengagement and bystander.

Reliability

To investigate the mean, standard deviation and maximum score for all study variables involved in the study i.e. relationship between Empathy, Moral Disengagement and bystander Behaviours in the Bullying.

Data Screening

At the very first step data was screened carefully. There were no missing values in all over the data sheet. The minimum and maximum actual scores were checked to determine the correct recording of the data on data sheet. After the data is ready for the further analysis

Table 4.1 Reliability Analysis of the scale used in the study (N=120)

Variable	K	M	SD	A	Range	
					Potential	Actual
Toronto empathy questionnaire	3	13.57	5.1	.62	1-5	1.00-4.33
Moral disengagement in bullying scale	3	76.72	14.6		0-4	0.10-3.25
Bystander behaviour scale	3	24.39	4.0		0-3	0-2.7

Table 4.1 showed mean, standard deviation, actual/potential score and reliability coefficient of the Toronto empathy questionnaire, moral disengagement in bullying scale and bystander behavior scale. All the scales have good internal consistency.

Pearson product moment correlation

It was hypothesized that empathy is likely to have a positive relationship with the defender behavior while negative relationship with reinforce behavior and outside behavior of the students. Hypothesized that moral disengagement as a global index would be positively associated with the bullying behavior and negatively associated with defending behavior. Pearson product moment correlation was applied to test this hypothesis.

Table 4.2

Pearson product moment correlation among study variables (N=120)

CLASS	GENDER	TEQ	MDBS	BBS
Class	.368***	.371***	.213*	.257**
Gender		.008	.174*	.131
TEQ			.324***	-.140
MDBS				.205
BBS				

Note. * $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .001$, class (8th=1, 9th=2, 10th=3), Gender (boys=1, girls=2), TEQ = Toronto empathy scale, MDBS = moral disengagement bystander scale, BBS = bystander bullying scale.

Table 4.2 showed that moral disagreement in bullying and Bystander behavior scale had negative relationship with increasing bullying behavior which suggests that people facing high bullying victimization and having higher disengagement with moral action. Moreover, empathy had significant positive relationship with decreasing bullying action and Bystander behavior.

Table 4.2 also shown gender differences in moral disengagement and Bystandard behavior which indicates that girls and boys both were engaginmg bullying behavior. Empathy behavior decreased bullying in school. Girls more engage show more empathy behavior as compare to boys.

Table 4.3

Summry o regression analysis for predicting subjective learning styles (N=120) K

Predictor	R	acdamic adjustment	
		ΔR	B
Constant	.007	.007	
% obtain previous class			.005
Father education			.011
Parental involvement			.174
Parental encourgment			.091

*Note: Band SE=\$ unstandardize coefficient, beta=\$ standardized coefficients, \$p=\$ significant value: *\$p<.05; **\$p<.01; ***\$p<.001;\$*

In regression analysis, occupational stress is likely to predict negative relationship with psychological well being of working women. Table \$4.3\$ model of regression shown \$P\$ (significant value) is \$.000.\$ so hypotesis of current research is correct.

Table 4.3

Summary of regression analysis for predicting learning styles (N=100)

Predictors	B	SE	B	R^2	P
MDBC	.005	.034	.174		.030
	.000				
BBSC	.011	.011	.091		.038
	.011				

Note: B and SE= unstandardize coefficient, \$\beta\$= standardized coefficients, \$p\$= significant value:

\$^{}p<.05; ^{**}p<.01; ^{***}p<.001;\$*

In regression analysis, occupational stress is likely to predict negative relationship with psychological well being of working women. Table 4.3 model of regression shown P (significant value) is .000. so hypothesis of current research is correct.

Discussion

To better understand children's morality in relation to aggression such as bullying, focusing on moral principles or rules is not enough: We already know that children generally judge bullying as wrong using moral reasons such as referring to its harmful consequences when justifying their judgments (cf., Thunberg, 2010a), and that bullies are as able as defenders to judge moral permissibility of harmful actions (Gini et al., 2011). In his theory of moral disengagement, Bandura (1999, 2002, 2004) suggested that there are socio-cognitive processes through which people can disengage from moral standards and instead behave inhumanely toward other people. In accordance with the theory of moral disengagement and previous research, moral disengagement in the current study was positively associated with bullying behavior.

Comparisons of the level of empathy between those who reported bullying to those whodid not produced a similar pattern of results for boys and girls but at different absolute levels. boys who reported bullying did not differ from non-bullies on any of the measures of

empathy, however, boys who bullied frequently were found to be deficient in both affective and total empathy. Interestingly, girls who bullied also had significantly lower affective and total empathy than girls who did not, but an exploratory analysis suggested that this bully/non-bully difference may have been the result of the very low empathy of a small number of high frequency girl bullies.

The significant disparity between the levels of empathy for boys and girls would have concealed this pattern and, instead, produced an artifactual result: that those who report bullying others, at any frequency have low cognitive, affective and total empathy. Whereas previous studies have demonstrated or measured moral disengagement as a unidimensional construct. Pezzoli et al. (2012) found a four-factor solution that confirmed the four major domains of moral disengagement (cognitive restructuring, minimizing one's agentive role disregarding/distorting the consequences, and victim attribution). In their study, only cognitive restructuring was significantly related to pro-bullying behavior at the individual level. Our findings made a unique contribution to the literature by showing that not all three mechanisms of cognitive restructuring appear to be activated in bullying.

By examining moral disengagement at the mechanism level instead of major domain level, the present study revealed that whereas moral justification was positively associated with bullying behavior, euphemistic labeling and advantageous comparison were not associated with bullying behavior at all. Because moral justification interprets the aggressive and harmful act as serving a moral purpose, a person who subscribes to this belief, "apart from being more likely to engage in this behavior, is also likely to experience positive feelings for doing so (e.g. pride, self-approval) which, in turn, further facilitates harmful behavior" (Pornari & Wood, 2010, p. 90). Hence, he or she can consider him or herself a moral agent while inflicting harm on others (Bandura, 2002).

The current study adds valuable knowledge to the literature of bystander/defender behaviour by demonstrating that the bystander actions in bullying situations cannot be sufficiently explained in terms of moral agency versus moral disengagement (cf., Bandura, 1999, 2002). Our analysis is unique in that it introduces the concept of moral distress as a third major process that has to be considered in order to better understand bystander actions among children. Moral distress has previously been used to describe a particular form of stress or distress among professional nurses that could emerge when their working conditions prevent them from acting in accordance with their ethical guidelines (Jameton, 1984; Lützen & Kist, 2012; McCarthy & Deady, 2008). The concept has also been used recently to discuss teachers' experiences of ethical dilemmas as a result of their working conditions (Colnerud, 2013). Nevertheless, our analysis revealed that even children experience moral distress from time to time in the role of bystander in bullying situations in school. Whereas moral disengagement might be seen as a state of resolving the potential conflict between thinking that supports intervening and thinking that supports non-intervening and co-bullying, by rejecting or ignoring and accepting, the conflict between and is unresolved in moral distress.

implications

The study may play a valuable role in encouraging managing bullies behavior. These findings may have implications for school students to identify problems and also finding out solutions. It is helpful to investigate the causes of students' bullies behavior. It is also important for increasing empathy in children and decrease the level of bullies behavior.

Limitations

Sample was comprised only school. Working man were not included. Physically disable students were not include.

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