



Effects of Bullying on Academic Success as Mediated by Protective Factors

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INTRODUCTION

- Past research has shown that bullying can have a negative impact on students' academic performance, including mathematics achievement. Furthermore, research has shown that aggression and bullying can be more prominent in first-generation adolescent immigrants compared to non-immigrant adolescents (Pottie et al., 2020).
- Family support, quality time, and supportive relationships between parent and child are believed to act as a buffer from bullying. Family support, for example, reduces victimization with general bullying, household physical maltreatment, verbal abuse by siblings, and other school bullying forms (Chrysanthou & Vasilakis, 2020).
- Interestingly, conversations about bullying with actively engaged parents can promote better communication in bullying behaviors of children. For example, greater intervention between mother and father provided prosocial and passive advice to their children (Lester et al., 2017).
- In general, having warm and responsive parents, or facilitative parenting, can act as a protective barrier and assist in peer relationships and bullying. In addition, the prevalence of bullying can be related to children's social skills with their peers and affect their response and self-esteem if they are either bullied (Healy et al., 2013).

THE PRESENT STUDY

- The present study investigated differences in bullying experiences by immigrant status and whether or not family involvement would mediate the relationship between bullying and academic achievement.
- We hypothesized that being bullied would be greater for immigrant than non-immigrant adolescents.
- We also hypothesized that protective family factors would mediate the relationship between being bullied and academic success.

METHOD

Participants

- Data was drawn from the 2014 Health Behaviors in School-Aged Children (HBSC) data set ($N=16,339$).
- The sample sizes and demographic information are listed below:
 - Germany ($n = 5,689$, $M_{age} = 13.48$, $SD_{age} = 1.65$, 49.4% female, 50.6% male)
 - Israel ($n = 5,066$, $M_{age} = 13.80$, $SD_{age} = 1.63$, 53.3% female, 46.7% male)
 - Belgium ($n = 5,548$, $M_{age} = 13.44$, $SD_{age} = 1.67$, 50.8% female, 49.2% male) SD_{age}

Procedure

- IBM SPSS and R were used to analyze data and conduct path analyses.

Measurements

- Survey items that assessed academic achievement, bullying, and family support were included (see Table 1).

RESULTS

Table 1
Measure items used.

Variable	<i>M (SD)</i>	Example Item	Higher Scores Indicate
Academic Achievement (1 item)	2.73 (.856)	"In your opinion, what does your class teacher(s) think about your school performance compared to your classmates?"	Higher feelings of achievement
Been Bullied (1 item)	1.56 (1.030)	"How often have you been bullied at school in the past couple of months?"	Higher instances of bullying
Family Help (4 items; $\alpha = .923$)	5.72 (1.517)	"My family really tries to help me."	More access to family protective factors

- A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the relationship between immigration status and being bullied. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated based on a significant Levene's test (Levene's statistic = 10.854, $p < .001$).
- Results showed no effect on the amount individuals were bullied by their citizenship status. $F(1,16,337) = 1.71$, $p = .190$.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics of variables Been Bullied and Immigrant Status

	N	Mean	St. Dev
Non-immigrant	13,751	1.56	1.022
Immigrant	2,588	1.59	1.072
Total	16,339	1.56	1.030

- Additionally, a series of path analyses were conducted to understand the relationship between being bullied and academic achievement as mediated by family help in the three nations of interest.
- Results showed that being bullied had a significant negative relationship with academic achievement ($\beta = -0.091$, $p < .001$).
- Additionally, within the full model, a significant negative relationship was demonstrated between being bullied and academic achievement as mediated through family help ($\beta = -0.068$, $p < .001$).

Table 3
Standardized regression weight and mediation results for each path analysis.

Country	IV (n)	Full Model IV → DV	Full Model IV → M	Full Model M → DV	Unmediated IV → DV	Freedman-Schatzkin (df)	Aroian	% Mediated
Full Sample	16,339	-0.068***	-0.124***	0.184***	-0.091***	-25.488***	-14.01***	25.04%
Germany	5548	-0.051***	-0.097***	0.16***	-0.067***	-11.327***	-6.108***	23.16%
Israel	5725	-0.052***	-0.093***	0.16***	-0.067***	-12.889***	-6.118***	22.35%
Belgium	5066	-0.05***	-0.143***	0.2***	-0.079***	-15.023***	-8.498***	36.20%

Notes. * $p > .05$; ** $p > .01$; *** $p > .001$

DISCUSSION

- In the present study, we examined the relationship between immigrant status and experiences as victims of bullying. Additionally, we investigated the role that protective factors such as family help might play in the relationship between victimization of bullying and academic success.
- Our first hypothesis stated that immigration status would affect the amount of bullying a student would experience was not supported by our data.
- These findings are contrary to previous research on bullying, which has found immigrant status to have a significant effect on the amount of bullying experienced (Pottie et al., 2020). Past studies, however, have focused on one particular cultural context rather than drawing data from multiple cultural contexts such as the present study.
- The second hypothesis was supported such that a significant negative relationship between experiencing bullying and academic achievement was mediated by family help. Findings showed that family involvement can mitigate the impact of bullying on academic achievement.
- These findings were supported in previous research which posited protective family factors damped the negative effects of bullying on students, such as in academic success (Healy et al., 2013).

Limitations and Future Directions

- One limitation of this study is the possibility for non-response biases due to the variation in sampling methods, modes of data collection, and response rates. Countries from which the data were collected have different ethical requirements for parental consent; therefore, lower response rates are more likely to occur from countries with active consent procedures than countries with passive consent procedures.
- Items on the survey may not have the same meaning across different contexts as variations across regions exist between cultural, economic, and historical backgrounds.
- There is potential for response bias due to the nature of self-report questionnaires and students who may not answer sensitive questions with complete transparency.
- Further research may explore how school environments and social support groups outside of the home may mediate the effects of bullying and academic success.

Contact Information

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