Character Education Classroom Guidance Lessons as an Intervention to Reduce Bullying Among Adolescent Girls

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What does the literature say about girl-girl bullying and character education?

- In a review of bullying literature from recent years, numerous studies were found examining the manifestation of girl-girl bullying.
- Many other studies were found that focus on character education as a means to modify behavioral problems in schools.
What does the literature say about girl-girl bullying and character education?

- The literature lacks information regarding the use of character education-based interventions to reduce bullying among adolescent girls.
How have girl-girl bullying and character education interventions been studied?

- 5 out of 8 studies included in the literature review were empirical articles.
- Half of these empirical article studies used a single subject design to investigate a bullying intervention, while the other half employed a program evaluation.
- These studies used self-report assessments, including the Reynolds Bully Victimization Scale.
What is girl-girl bullying?

- Repeated forms of aggressive behavior involving a power imbalance between two or more girls
Bullying Manifestation: Girls vs. Boys

- A study by Casey-Cannon et al. (2001) examines differences in the manifestation of bullying between genders
- Boys reported significantly more overt victimization than girls
- Girls reported significantly more relational victimization or socially hurtful behaviors than boys
- The authors hypothesize that because girls placed more importance on social relationships, they also tend to report higher levels of relational victimization
Girl-Girl Bullying Consequences

• In many high schools in the United States, bullying among adolescent girls is a serious problem that results in violence, disciplinary actions, anxiety, and depression.

• Effective interventions are in high demand!

• According to a study by Casey-Cannon (2001), school counselors are in the best position to implement bullying interventions because they empower students to increase their sense of control over their social experiences and improve their feelings of belonging in the school.
What moderates bullying?

- One study by Davidson et al. (2007) indicated that for females, parent support moderated the relationship between victimization and internalizing distress from bullying.
- In addition, results revealed that close friend support for females moderate the relationship between victimization and externalizing distress from bullying.
- This means that social support may play a buffering role between victimization and internalizing distress from bullying.
What interventions are recommended to reduce bullying?

- Character education has become increasingly utilized as an intervention tool for reducing behavioral problems (including bullying)
- Only a select few character education programs have been evaluated and deemed effective
- According to the U.S. Department of Education What Works Clearinghouse (2007), the Positive Action program, a character education classroom guidance program, was found to be effective in reducing behavioral problems within schools
The Positive Action program

• In a study on the Positive Action program, results demonstrate that, after two years of the program’s implementation, students endorsed 41% fewer bullying behaviors compared to students in control schools (Li, 2011).
Research Limitations

- Almost all studies included in the literature review included self-report student surveys for the purpose of gathering bullying data.
- Therefore, the studies were limited by the possibility of self-report bias.
Implications for further research

- The literature lacks information regarding the use of character education-based interventions to reduce bullying among adolescent girls.
- Therefore, a study could be implemented to learn more about this intervention’s effects on girl-girl bulling.
Proposed Study

- Research Question: Is the implementation of character education classroom guidance lessons an effective intervention for reducing bullying among adolescent girls?
- Hypothesis: yes!
Proposed Study

- Intervention study using Positive Action program classroom guidance lessons and measurement by the Reynolds Bully-Victimization Scale (BVS)
- Single subject ABA design- including a pre-intervention assessment, post-intervention assessment, and post-withdrawal assessment
The Study

- **Subjects:** 9th Grade girls and boys at Cary High School
- **Independent variable** = intervention of character education classroom guidance lessons, which will include curriculum obtained from The Positive Action program
- **Dependent variable** = bullying among adolescent girls, which will be measured via Reynold’s Bully Victimization Scale and more frequent student and/or teacher observation assessments
The Intervention

- Character education classroom guidance lessons (no more than 15 minutes each) will be taught by school counselors once per week in all English I classrooms until the end of the semester.
- The program’s curriculum is based on the concept that people feel good about themselves when they do positive actions.
Methods and Measurement

- **Baseline:** taken at the beginning of the year with BVS assessment
- **Post-Intervention:** students will take the BVS following the first-semester intervention to measure changes from the baseline data and evaluate the short-term effectiveness of the intervention
- **Post-Withdrawal:** the BVS will be administered one final time to measure any further changes from the post-intervention data
Methods and Measurement

- Additional smaller, more frequent assessments follow each lesson in order to gain more data points and discern which components of the curriculum are most effective
- Short student reports of experienced bullying
- Teacher observations of bullying in the classroom
Figure 1. Bully Victimization Scale (BVS) Results from the pre-intervention baseline assessment, post-intervention assessment, and post-withdrawal assessments by gender. This figure illustrates BVS results from each assessment administered to students.
Figure 2. Average number of student reports of bullying following each lesson by gender. This figure illustrates the average number of student reports of bullying on student bullying surveys administered each week.
Importance of Study

- Effective girl-girl bullying interventions are in high demand
- Because the Positive Action program character education classroom guidance lessons have been found effective at reducing general behavior problems in schools, this intervention could be very effective at reducing bullying behaviors among girls
Questions?


