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The Role of Primary Appraisals in the Relationship between Peer Victimization and Psychological Wellbeing in Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review

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Introduction

- Peer victimisation is a common experience in school for many children and young people. It includes physical, verbal, and indirect aggression where the perpetrator intends to cause harm to the victim.
- Research indicates that peer victimisation has both an immediate and long-term relationship with poor psychological wellbeing and adjustment (Wolke & Lereya, 2015; Reijniers et al., 2011; Gin & Pozzoli, 2009).
- Peer victimisation is clearly a stressful experience for victims, and therefore can be explored using models of stress, such as Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) Transactional Model of Stress. As shown in Figure 1, the Transactional Model of Stress proposes that following an interaction an individual goes through a process of appraisal, which involves them evaluating the relevance and importance of an interaction for their own wellbeing.

Figure 1: Lazarus & Folkman’s (1984) Transactional Model of Stress

Appraisals

- Primary appraisal: An evaluation of the nature of the experience in the context of personal goals
- Secondary appraisal: An evaluation of the coping resources available to the individual.

Lazarus (1998) argued that primary appraisals determine the intensity and type of emotional reaction. However, the study of the role of primary appraisals in this relationship has attracted relatively little research attention.

Therefore, the aim of this systematic review is to examine studies that have explored the relationship between peer victimization, primary appraisal and psychological wellbeing in children and adolescents.

Method

Literature searching for the systematic review took place from March to May 2015. Figure 2 outlines the search terms, selection criteria, and search engines used.

Figure 2: Systematic Review Method

This review followed the PRISMA reporting guidelines for systematic reviews, see Figure 3. The methodological quality of the included papers was evaluated using an adapted version of the Munn et al., (2014) checklist for prevalence studies. The criteria include ten questions exploring the sampling procedures, method and analysis components of the research study.

Figure 3: PRISMA Diagram

Results

As shown in Figure 3 and in Table 1, seven papers were included in the final systematic review. The quality ratings of the studies ranged from 7 to 9.5.

Table 1: Study Characteristics & Critical Review Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catterton &amp; Hunter (2010)</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>110, From 4 schools</td>
<td>54 males</td>
<td>56 females</td>
<td>8-12 years</td>
<td>M=10.08, SD=1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter et al. (2010)</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>924 or 925</td>
<td>54% males</td>
<td>46% females</td>
<td>8-12 years</td>
<td>M=9.81, SD=0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malecki et al., (2015)</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>612, From 1 school</td>
<td>49 females</td>
<td>51% males</td>
<td>11-13 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson &amp; Hunter (2012)</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>146, From 3 schools</td>
<td>44% male</td>
<td>56% female</td>
<td>10-13 years</td>
<td>M=11.35, SD=1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor, Sullivan &amp; Kliewer (2013)</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>54% female</td>
<td>46% male</td>
<td>10-16 years</td>
<td>M=12.11, SD=1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gianotta et al., (2012)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>155, From 1 school</td>
<td>81 females</td>
<td>74 males</td>
<td>12-13 years</td>
<td>M=12.2, SD=0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter, Boyle &amp; Warden (2007)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,429, From 15 schools</td>
<td>50% males</td>
<td>50% females</td>
<td>8-13 years</td>
<td>M=9.37, SD=0.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

Across the studies, peer victimisation, primary appraisals and adjustment were measured in different ways, making direct comparison difficult. However, primary appraisals, in the form of threat and control appraisals, have been found to play a role in the relationship between peer victimisation and adjustment. This relationship was found between different types of peer victimisation, such as verbal and physical aggression, and different measures of psychological wellbeing. These findings indicate a possible mechanism for how peer victimisation relates to adjustment and future research should explore this relationship further using more diverse measures of primary appraisal.

References


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