Examining the Relationship between Emotion Perception and Bullying: A Proposal

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ABSTRACT

Bullying and aggressive behaviors have adverse effects on many children. Violent behavior among children occurs most in the school setting and may lead to negative emotional outcomes later in life (Kub & Feldman, 2015). According to a study conducted by Baroncelli et al. (2014), boys who have been found to be high in aggression have a difficult time perceiving relevant social cues such as fear and anger. However, boys were prone to frequently identify happiness and fear in faces when a different emotion was expressed. For girls, Baroncelli and colleagues did not find any significant relationships. The purpose of this paper was to conceptually replicate the research of Baroncelli et al. (2014), which was originally done in Italy. For my study, I plan on using children in the United States to determine if the ability to perceive emotion predicts aggression. Participants will be recruited from Hyde Park Middle School in Las Vegas, Nevada and will consist of approximately 1,100 male and female students. The Aggression Scale (Orpinas & Frankowski, 2001) and the Diagnostic Analysis of Nonverbal Accuracy –2 (DANVA2; Nowicki, 2013; Nowicki & Duke, 1994) will be completed online and will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. In order to determine if there is a relationship between aggression and emotion perception, I will calculate the correlation between the DANVA and the Aggression Scale.

INTRODUCTION

Aggression can be defined but is not limited to the following aspects, which may or may not occur together: aggressive behavior, subjective feelings like rage or hostility, biological and physiological reactivity, aggressive motives and desires, and environmental factors (Bolman, 1974). Aggression and aggressive behavior in children seem to vary in how they are defined. Aggressive behavior in children is often related to violent and delinquent behavior, which includes many intense overt hostile and aggressive feelings and anger (Simeon & Links, 1978). Violence can be defined as a multitude of aggressive behaviors that are intended to cause harm resulting in injury or death to individuals or destruction of things (Bolman, 1974). Although the majority of children experience aggression, either physical or relational, it is critical for their development to learn healthy coping mechanisms. Emotional intelligence is the ability to be aware of, manage, and clearly express one’s emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). It is important for children to develop emotional intelligence early in development and continue to improve it throughout life in order to have successful social interactions with their peers. Children equipped with social and emotional skills are more likely to avoid the causes and consequences of emotions, and labeling emotions accurately are able to improve their social information processing skills (Arsenio & Lemereise, 2001). With a solid understanding of emotions, children would have the ability to engage in healthy social interactions (Baroncelli, Ciucci, & Nowicki, 2014). One of the key studies on bullying and emotion perception was conducted by Baroncelli et al. (2014). In that study, participants were recruited from a middle school in Tuscany, Central Italy. Participants ranged in age from 11 to 15 years old and attended grades 6, 7, and 8. This sample was primarily made up of Italian school children, with the remaining comprising of Eastern European, Balkan, African, South American, and Asian children. Data were collected during regular school hours by trained assistants. To start, trained assistants facilitated a comprehensive discussion in the classroom to ensure all students fully understood bullying. Following the discussion, an 11-item self-report questionnaire was distributed to measure involvement in traditional bullying. The Diagnostic Analysis of Nonverbal Accuracy Scale (DANVA; 2001) measures the ability to perceive happiness, sadness, anger and fear in facial expressions. There are two sections: the DANVA- AF and DANVA-CF. The DANVA-CF consists of child facial expressions and DANVA-AF consists of adult facial expressions totaling 24 photograph facial expressions for both. Each test uses 12 female and 12 male faces, displaying an equal number of high and low intensity emotions, portraying happiness, sadness, anger and fear. Each participant will be asked to identify if the person in the photograph felt happy, sad, angry or scared. The photographs will be shown for a total of two seconds and then the participant will be asked to select which of the four emotions they felt was being expressed. The total number of correct answer choices can vary from 0 to 48 on the DANVA subscales, with higher scores indicating greater accuracy of facial expression recognition. I estimate it will take 20 minutes to complete this measure.

METHOD

Participants

Participants will be recruited from Hyde Park Middle School in Las Vegas, Nevada. The sample will consist of approximately 1,100 students, from grades 6 and 7. They will be asked to complete the DANVA-2 test and the Aggression Scale at the beginning of the school year. The sample will consist of approximately 1,100 male and female students. The Aggression Scale (Orpinas & Frankowski, 2001) and the Diagnostic Analysis of Nonverbal Accuracy –2 (DANVA2; Nowicki, 2013; Nowicki & Duke, 1994) will be completed online and will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. In order to determine if there is a relationship between aggression and emotion perception, I will calculate the correlation between the DANVA and the Aggression Scale.

Measures

The Aggression Scale (Orpinas & Frankowski, 2001) is a self-report scale that measures aggressive behaviors in young adolescents. The scale consists of 11 items which measure behaviors that could be potentially harmful psychologically and physically to others (Orpinas & Frankowski, 2001). The scale includes questions about overt aggressive behaviors (such as name-calling, teasing, encouraging to fight) and physical aggression (such as punching, pushing, and slapping) and also inquires about anger and the frequency of anger throughout the day. Responses for all items may vary from 0 times a day to 6 or more times a day. I estimate it will take 10 minutes to complete this measure.

The Aggression Scale

The Aggression Scale was developed using a list of common verbal and physical aggressive behaviors. All items were reviewed by a school counselor, 12 teachers, and 2 university professors with a background in school health promotion and violence prevention. Content Areas:

1. Encouraging fights
2. Threatening, teasing, or hitting others
3. Feelings of anger throughout the day
4. Talking badly about other kids
5. Encouraging laughter at other kids

Data Analysis

To determine if there is a relationship between aggression and emotion perception, I will calculate the correlation between the DANVA and the Aggression Scale.

REFERENCES


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