Parent Perceptions of Bullying and Concordance with Student Reports

Melissa K. Holt, Ph.D.
Boston University School of Education
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Parent Perceptions of Bullying

- Bullying is a key concern for parents\(^1\).
- Across multiple studies, parents report lower rates of bullying than students do\(^2,3,4\):
  - Varies somewhat by type of bullying\(^2\).
  - Some evidence that child sex affects concordance\(^4\).
  - Discrepancies might in part be due to youth not telling their parents about bullying experiences.
    - Yet, parents believe children will talk to them\(^3\).

Parent Responses to Bullying

- Parents are more likely to discuss victimization vs. perpetration with their children\(^1,2\)
- Dutch study of elementary school parents focused on victimization\(^1\): 24% did not try to stop it; 37% tried to stop it with varying levels of effectiveness
- Parent perceptions of school climate are associated with their responses to bullying\(^3\)
- When parents do become involved, deleterious effects associated with being bullied can be reduced\(^4,5\)

Parent-Child Concordance Study
Holt et al., 2009

- 205 5th grade students and their parents
- 22 elementary schools
- Ethnically diverse
- 54% female students
- 91% female guardians

- University of Illinois Bully and Peer Victimization Scales\(^1\)
- Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire\(^2\)
- Parent attitudes toward, awareness of, and responses to bullying
- Family characteristics & functioning

1. Espelage & Holt, 2003; 2. Hamby et al., 2004
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Status</th>
<th>Parent Believes Child Has Been Teased</th>
<th>Parent Does Not Believe Child Has Been Teased</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child reported being teased</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child reported not being teased</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Status</th>
<th>Parent Believes Child Teased Others</th>
<th>Parent Does Not Believe Child Has Teased Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child reported teasing others</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child did not report teasing others</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional Key Findings

- 37% of parents indicated schools should deal with bullying without parent interference.

- Parent beliefs on how to respond to bullying:
  - Kids should fight back (37%)
  - Kids should stay out of the way of bullies (30%)
  - Kids should stand up for themselves (88%)

- Home environments were linked to bullying involvement:
  - Victims: Criticism, few rules, maltreatment
  - Bullies: Lack of supervision, maltreatment, exposure to domestic violence
Parent Perceptions of Bullying Study
Social Adjustment and Bullying Prevention Lab

- 480 3rd-8th grade students
  - 47% female
- 159 parents
- Ethnically diverse

- California Bully Victimization Scale¹
- Definition of bullying with example behaviors
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire²

1. Felix et al., 2011; 2. Goodman, 2001
Rates of Bullying, Student & Parent Report

- Teasing
- Rumors
- Ignored
- Hit
- Threatened
- Stealing
- Sexual
- Cyber
- Total

Student vs Parent
Students were most likely to speak to friends about bullying (43.9%), followed by adults at home (28.4%)
- 70.1% of students said adults were “somewhat” or “very” helpful at stopping bullying
- 27.8% of bullied students reported missing school for fear of being bullied whereas 4.3% of parents indicated their children had missed school due to concerns about bullying
- How did student and parent reports of youth mental health compare?
Bullying Involvement & Mental Health

- Student report
- Parent report
Meaning & Implications of Discrepancies

- When discrepancies exist related to bullying, parents often minimize their children’s experiences\(^1\)
- What does the broader literature on informant discrepancies in child psychopathology tell us?\(^2\)
- Are parents reporting on children who are truly involved in bullying?

\(^1\) Mishna et al., 2006; 2. De Los Reyes & Kazdin, 2005
Summary and Implications

- Parent involvement is key to bullying prevention\(^1\)
- Schools should provide parents with both basic & nuanced information about bullying to improve accuracy in parent perceptions

**What can parents do?\(^2\)**
- Maintain open communication with children
- Identify warning signs
- Coach children on responses to bullying
- Model kindness and leadership
- Work with the school
- Promote children’s strengths

1. Ttofi & Farrington, 2009; 2. Lovegrove et al., 2013