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Hostile attributions bias and perceived self-efficacy of adolescent bullies, victims, bully-victims, and those uninvolved in bullying.

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Background

• Clarification of the cognitive underpinnings of involvement in bullying should improve intervention and prevention work

• **Self-efficacy?**
  → distinguish between efficacy for aggressive and non-aggressive behaviours?

• **Hostile attributions biases?**
  → Regardless of hostile attribution bias, self-efficacy (as above) predicts use of aggression or prosocial behaviour
  → However, hostile attribution biases may differentiate between bullies and bully-victims
Background

• Theoretical basis for differentiating intervention and/or prevention based on theory?

Hypotheses

1. Victims will have lower overall self-efficacy (i.e. for both aggressive and non-aggressive actions) compared to uninvolved pupils
2. Bully-victims and bullies will have higher aggressive self-efficacy than victims and uninvolved pupils
3. Bully-victims will have a higher hostile attribution bias than victims, bullies and uninvolved pupils
Method

- Participants were 520 pupils (49% male) aged 12 - 14 years attending mainstream Scottish schools. Three hundred and six pupils were in Secondary Two and 205 in Secondary Three.

- Measures were completed in classroom settings:
  - victimisation
  - self-efficacy – vignette measure
  - hostile attribution bias – vignette measure
  (latter two measures based on Hubbard et al.'s 2001 measures)
Results

- Bullies: 5% overall (7% of boys, 4% of girls)
- Bully-victims: 9% overall (9% of boys, 8% of girls)
- Victims: 35% overall (33% of boys, 36% of girls)
- Uninvolved: 51% overall (50% of boys, 52% of girls)

- Aggressive and non-aggressive self-efficacy scores correlated ($r = .44$, $p < 0.001$)
- Neither type of self-efficacy correlated with hostile attribution score

- 3-way mixed-ANOVA: gender x bullying involvement (bully/ bully-victim/ victim/ uninvolved) x self-efficacy (aggressive/ non-aggressive)
Results

Self-efficacy:

- 3-way mixed-ANOVA: gender x bullying involvement (bully/ bully-victim/ victim/ uninvolved) x self-efficacy (aggressive/ non-aggressive):
  - no effect of gender.
  - main effect of self-efficacy: overall, pupils reported significantly higher non-aggressive than aggressive self-efficacy.
  - main effect of bullying involvement: victims reported significantly lower overall self-efficacy than uninvolved pupils.
  - no interactions.
Results

Hostile Attribution Bias:

- 2-way ANOVA: gender x bullying involvement (bully/ bully-victim/ victim/ uninvolved)

→ no main effects or interactions.
Discussion

• Victims reported significantly lower self-efficacy than uninvolved pupils (and were lower than all other groups at a trend level)
  → such perceptions are likely to contribute toward the maintenance of victimisation by encouraging less adaptive responses i.e. submissive and unassertive behaviours

• Hostile attribution biases unrelated to status
  → perhaps bully victims are *not* simply provocative victims, and these two groups must be distinguished more clearly