

Childhood Bullying Victimization and Coping Mechanisms in Young Adults: Summary

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At least one third of Canadians have reported experiencing childhood bullying victimization (Government of Canada, 2012; Safe Canada, 2021), and while the research on the relationship between childhood bullying victimization and coping in child populations has been increasing, there has been less research on the relationship in adult populations. Bullying is defined in the literature as intentional, unpleasant/hurtful behaviour that is physical or psychological, often repeated, and directed against a person who has difficulty defending themselves. Those who have these negative actions directed against them are considered victimized or as having experienced victimization. Coping is defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as “cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (p. 178) and is divided into problem-focused, emotion-focused, and maladaptive. As prior research has shown that childhood bullying victimization is related to greater negative affect and an increased likelihood of using maladaptive coping strategies, the current study was designed to analyze the relationship between childhood bullying victimization, affect following the presentation of a bullying victimization scenario, and coping as a response to the scenario. It was predicted that there would be significant positive relationships between childhood bullying victimization, negative affect, and maladaptive coping and that childhood bullying victimization and negative affect together would predict maladaptive coping. Participants were 160 university students (mean age = 20.97) who first reported their present affect before being presented with the bullying scenario. They then reported their present affect again following the scenario and indicated how they would cope with the particular situation. Subsequently, the participants reported on their childhood bullying victimization experiences. Results indicated a significant positive relationship between negative affect and maladaptive coping, while childhood bullying victimization was not significantly related to the

other variables. These findings suggest that the more negative emotions one experiences following a bullying victimization situation, the more likely they are to cope with that circumstance in maladaptive ways, which as the literature suggests, can be detrimental to adaptive functioning. Further analyses beyond the main predictions of the study were also conducted regarding the relationships between childhood bullying victimization, affect (positive and negative) and coping (problem-focused, emotion-focused, and maladaptive). As there appears to be a gap in previous research for the incorporation of affect in the relationship between childhood bullying victimization and coping, this study contributes to filling that gap. Future research on the relationship between childhood bullying victimization, affect, and coping should consider replicating the present study using a different measure of childhood bullying victimization.