

School-Based Violence Prevention Programs To Reduce Bullying and Aggressive Behaviors

Review 5

Ryan, W., & Smith, J. D. (2009). Antibullying programs in schools: How effective are evaluation practices? *Prevention Science*, 10(3), 248–259. PubMed abstract available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19266281>.

Objectives	Assess the quality of peer-reviewed antibullying program evaluations (not the efficacy of the programs themselves).
Studies Included	Thirty-one U.S. and international studies published from 1999 to 2007
Participants in the Studies	School-aged children (grades unspecified)
Outcomes	Program monitoring, including program integrity and verification, study design, outcomes measured, and statistical analyses
Limitations of the Studies	Program evaluations were not adequately rigorous or comprehensive in their design. Postintervention follow-up periods were less than 6 months, outcome measures were collected by only one informant type, and studies often included only one outcome type. Studies did not report effect sizes.

Results

The studies represented both universal and selective/indicated programs, with outcomes in the following areas: behavioral measures of involvement in bullying/victimization; measures of other behaviors, such as aggression, prosocial behavior, and coping; and nonbehavioral constructs such as attitudes or beliefs.

Interventions were delivered to individuals, peers, classrooms, schools, parents, and communities.

The studies were analyzed according to—

- Type of study (efficacy, effectiveness, and dissemination)
- Degree of program integrity and monitoring (including characteristics of adherence, exposure, quality of delivery, participant responsiveness, and program differentiation)
- Study design
- Qualitative data
- Time to posttest/follow-up

- Outcomes measured
- Statistical analyses conducted

Analysis of results indicated that fewer than 10% of the 31 studies qualified as either efficacy or effectiveness studies, and that evaluations of antibullying programs thus far have not been adequately rigorous or comprehensive in their design and execution to accept their outcomes as conclusive.

The authors made the following recommendations about the future of antibullying program research. Researchers should—

- Ensure standard program integrity monitoring and verification.
- Use control conditions and random assignment where possible; otherwise, consider a rigorous quasi-experimental design.
- Collect baseline data before the introduction of the intervention, and collect outcome data at least 6 months after intervention.
- In efficacy and effectiveness trials, collect follow-up data annually for 2 or more years.
- Use multiple methods and informants to assess program impacts.
- Report reliability and validity data for the instruments used.
- Collect qualitative data to augment implementation and outcome information.
- Use multilevel statistical modeling to take advantage of nested samples.
- Incorporate effect sizes and confidence intervals to better understand the extent of difference that the antibullying program can make.