

Research Digest: Youth Risk and Resilience

Buhs, E. S., Ladd, G. W., & Herald, S. L. (2006). Peer exclusion and victimization: Processes that mediate the relation between group rejection and children's classroom engagement and achievement? *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*, 1-13.

Research on peer relationships indicates a relationship between peer maltreatment and school adjustment. However, the establishment and change in this relationship over time has not been investigated. This study examines the direct and indirect relationship between different forms of peer maltreatment and school adjustment. Of primary interest are the effects of peer abuse and peer exclusion on classroom engagement, school avoidance, and achievement.

Over a 5 year period, 380 students from age 5-years old to 11-years old were followed and assessed on measures of peer group acceptance/rejection, peer exclusion, peer abuse, classroom participation, school avoidance, and achievement. Data gathered from students created an acceptance, chronic exclusion, and chronic abuse score for each student. Scores were also gathered for changes in classroom participation, school avoidance, and achievement. Results indicate that (a) that children less well accepted in kindergarten were at greater risk for peer maltreatment in subsequent grades, (b) chronic peer maltreatment in primary grades forecasted later school disengagement, and (c) children's achievement during the middle-grade years was primarily determined by their exposure to chronic peer exclusion and decreased classroom participation.

Although peer exclusion is not a highly visible form of peer maltreatment, it may present academic challenges for students. Peer exclusion appears to decrease classroom participation and foster disengagement from learning activities, thereby decreasing academic progress. This relationship and a more complete understanding of the various forms of peer maltreatment merit further study and are essential for the development of effective intervention programs.

This Research Digest is a product of the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools. The research presented is a sample of state-of-the-art research conducted in the area of youth risk and resilience by faculty at UNL. For more information on the Center, please contact Holly Sexton at hsexton1@unl.edu.