

Personality-Focused Intervention for Adolescents: Impact on Bullying and Distress

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Abstract : Introduction: There is a lack of targeted prevention programs for reducing bullying and distress among adolescents involved in bullying. The current study aimed to examine the impact of a personality-targeted intervention (Preventure) on bullying (victimization and perpetration) and distress among adolescent victims/bullies with high-risk personality types. Method: A cluster randomized trial (RCT) was conducted in 26 secondary schools (2190 students) in NSW and Victoria, Australia, as part of the Climate Schools and Preventure trial. The schools were randomly allocated to Preventure (13 schools received Preventure, 13 did not). Students were followed up at 4 time points (6, 12, 24 and 36 months post-baseline). Preventure involves two group sessions, based on cognitive behavioral therapy, and tailored to four personality types shown to increase risk of substance misuse and other emotional and behavioural problems, including impulsivity, sensation-seeking, anxiety sensitivity and hopelessness. Students were allocated to the personality-targeted groups based on their scores on the Substance Use Risk Profile Scale. Bullying was measured using an amended version of the Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Scale. Psychological distress was measured using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale. Results: Among high-risk students classified as victims at baseline, those in Preventure schools reported significantly less victimization and distress over time than those in control schools. Among high-risk students classified as bullies at baseline, those in Preventure schools reported significantly less distress over time than those in control schools (no difference for perpetration). Conclusion: Preventure is a promising intervention for reducing bullying victimization and psychological distress among adolescents involved in bullying.

Keywords : adolescents, bullying, personality, prevention

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