

Evaluation Research on the Implementation of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* in Pennsylvania Schools

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This study represents the largest evaluation of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)* to date in the United States, involving over 70,000 students in 214 schools. *OBPP* is a comprehensive, school-based program that includes schoolwide, classroom, individual, and community components (Olweus & Limber, 2010; Olweus et al., 2007). Its goals are to reduce and prevent bullying problems among schoolchildren and to improve peer relations at school. The program is designed for use in elementary, middle, and high schools (grades K–12). This study was made possible with generous funding from the Highmark Foundation and was conducted in collaboration with partners at Windber Research Institute.

Methodology

The study was conducted in two parts: (1) analyses with the full sample of students and schools, which allowed us to examine program effects over two years,¹ and (2) detailed analyses of program effects with two cohorts of schools, which permitted us to examine longer-term and year-by-year assessments over three years.² The results of this study are based on participants completing the *Olweus Bullying Questionnaire* at baseline and then yearly. This forty-item questionnaire has high reliability and good construct and concurrent validity (see e.g. Kyriakides et al., 2006; Olweus, 2010, 2013; Pellegrini, 2001; Solberg & Olweus, 2003).

Key Findings

- Findings revealed positive effects of *OBPP* on students' reports of being bullied and bullying others. These findings were consistent for global questions about being bullied (i.e., students responding that they had / had not been bullied 2–3 times a month or more often in the past couple of months) and about bullying others (i.e., students responding that they had / had not bullied others 2–3 times a month or more often). For most grades, and for both boys and girls,

1. Analyses include 72,251 students at baseline assessment, who were in grades 3–11. They were drawn from 214 schools and represent five cohorts.

2. These analyses include 94 schools from two cohorts. A total of 31,675 students completed baseline assessments.

the findings were also consistent for scale scores: measures that represent the average of nine different forms of being bullied and bullying others. For example, with one exception (8th graders), relative decreases in being bullied ranged from 11–17% between baseline and two-year follow-up. Relative decreases in bullying others ranged from 26–36%.

- The degree of change in bullying over time was also measured, showing large decreases in reports of being bullied and of bullying others.
- This study also measured program effects for students of different races or ethnicities. Program effects for being bullied and bullying others were somewhat larger for White students, but they were also notable for Black and Hispanic students.
- Positive program effects were also found for most of the individual forms of being bullied: verbal, physical, relational, and electronic (cyber) bullying. This table shows some of the relative reductions between baseline and three-year follow-up.

Reduction in being...	Elementary	Middle school	High school
...verbally bullied	27%	21%	20%
...socially excluded	26%	19%	28%
...physically bullied	37%	31%	27%

- Program effects for being bullied and bullying others were larger the longer the program was implemented.
- There were positive program effects related to students’ attitudes about bullying (e.g., students’ feelings when another student is being bullied, whether they thought they could join in bullying) and their reports of others’ actions to address bullying (e.g., how much teachers or fellow students have done about the problem).
- The design of the study allowed us to examine possible “history” effects (i.e., whether the passage of time or some other factor unrelated to *OBPP* may account for changes over time). Analyses clearly suggested that the observed positive changes over time were not due to “history effects” but rather were due to effects of *OBPP*.
- For more information about the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*, visit www.violencepreventionworks.org or call 1-800-328-9000.

References

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