Development, Acceptability, and Short-Term Outcomes of a Parent Module for a Brief, Bullying Bystander Intervention for Middle School Students in Rural, Low-Income Communities

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Acknowledgements
Mary Buller, Mentor
Laura Bond, CTR-IN Statistician

Funding Source
CTR-IN Pilot Grant
Pilot Grant

• We received NIMHD STTR/SBIR R41 Phase I ($230K) and R42 Phase II ($1.7M) grants to translate a brief bullying bystander intervention (STAC) into a technology-based format (STAC-T) for middle school students in rural schools.

• Goal of this pilot grant is to provide data to support a NIMHD STTR/SBIR R41/42 Fast Track proposal to develop the STAC-T Parent Module as a companion training, which will include a multi-site randomized trial rural schools.
The Problem of Bullying

- Bullying peaks in middle school, with 28% of students reporting bullying victimization\(^1\) and 33% reporting being cyberbullied.\(^2\)
- Youth in rural communities are at higher risk than urban youth,\(^3\) with 24% of rural youth reporting victimization compared to 20% of urban youth.\(^4\)
- In rural communities victimization is associated with peer rejection, negative school experiences, and low school satisfaction,\(^5\) as well as depression and anxiety.\(^6\)
- Approximately 88% of students witness bullying as bystanders.\(^7\)
- Witnessing bullying is associated with negative outcomes, including depression,\(^8\)\(^-\)\(^15\) anxiety,\(^10\)\(^,\)\(^12\)\(^,\)\(^16\) and somatic symptoms.\(^10\)
School Interventions

• Studies support the efficacy of comprehensive, school-wide programs but these programs require significant resources.\textsuperscript{8,14,17-19}
• Most programs do not include bystander interventions despite meta-analysis indicating they are important.\textsuperscript{20}
• Rural, low-income schools have further obstacles for implementation due to lower tax base to fund programs, training costs inflated by transportation needs related to bringing expert trainers to the school, frequent staff turnover with limited resources to re-establish expertise, school closures, staff overload and burnout, and lack of program advocates and local expertise in bullying prevention.\textsuperscript{22}
The STAC Program

- STAC\(^{23}\) is a brief, bullying bystander intervention developed to train middle school students how to “defend” targets of bullying
- STAC stands for four bullying bystander intervention strategies:
  - “Stealing the Show”
  - “Turning it Over”
  - “Accompanying Others”
  - “Coaching Compassion”
- 75-minute intervention followed by 2 bi-weekly boosters
- Data from studies in rural communities indicate:
  - Increases in knowledge, confidence, and use of the STAC strategies\(^{24-25}\)
  - Reductions in bullying perpetration\(^{24}\) and victimization\(^{24-25}\)
  - Reductions in social anxiety,\(^{24}\) depression,\(^{24,26}\) and passive suicidal ideation relative to control students\(^{26}\)
Need for Parent Training

- Parents play a vital role in impacting bullying behaviors.
- Parental knowledge of bullying, beliefs about victimization, including blame attributions, and self-efficacy in managing bullying are inversely related to bullying.\(^{27}\)
- Middle school students believe parents are indifferent and ineffective in addressing bullying;\(^ {28}\) however, when students do report to an adult, they most often report to parents (67%).\(^ {29}\)
- Several meta-analyses and literature reviews suggest that involving parents in bullying interventions decreases bullying,\(^{30-32}\) but few interventions include parent education.\(^ {33}\)
- Research in rural communities indicate:
  - School personnel believe parental involvement in bullying intervention is important\(^ {34,35}\)
  - Parents recognize bullying as one of the most significant challenges youth face\(^ {36}\)
  - Engaging parents in training can be difficult\(^ {22}\)
Purpose and Aims

- It is important to not only develop bullying education programs for parents, but to understand the unique challenges faced by parents in rural communities to reduce barriers for participation and increase engagement.
- **Goal**: To conduct formative research to inform the development of the STAC-T Parent Module by examining immediate training outcomes and program acceptability, as well as obtaining feedback about program content and delivery format to reduce implementation barriers and increase parental engagement.
  - **Aim 1**: Develop the content for the Parent Module based on our previous research with school personnel and the bullying literature.
  - **Aim 2**: Assess the need, feasibility, acceptability, delivery format preference and immediate outcomes (e.g., knowledge, attitudes, self-efficacy, and behavioral intentions) of the STAC-T Parent Module.
Aim 1

• Developed the content for the Parent Module based on our previous research with school personnel and the bullying literature

• The Parent Module is a 30-minute pre-recorded presentation including:
  – Normative feedback about bullying prevalence
  – Didactic information about bullying:
    • Definition
    • Types of bullying
    • Bystander roles
    • Associated negative consequences
  – Review of the student STAC strategies
  – Corresponding strategies parents can use to support students who act as “defenders”
  – Information about “perceptions vs. facts” about bullying:
    • Influence how parents respond when their child reports bullying to them
    • Teach parents strategies to encourage their child to act as a “defender”
Questions About Bullying
3. When students report bullying to an adult, what percentage of students tell a parent? What percentage tell a teacher?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Students Bullied Reporting the Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Types of Bullying
- **Physical**
  - Hurting someone’s body or destroying their property
  - “Shoulder checking,” “backpack checking,” and “trippering”

- **Verbal**
  - Saying or writing mean things about someone
  - Teasing, name calling, inappropriate comments, taunting, and threatening someone

- **Socio-Emotional (or Relationship)**
  - Hurting someone’s reputation or relationships
  - Leaving someone out on purpose, spreading rumors, embarrassing or humiliating someone on purpose

- **Cyberbullying**
  - Using electronic devices to hurt someone through text messages, social media, etc.

Bystander Roles
- **Assistant** (helps the bully)
- **Reinforcer** (watches or laughs)
- **Outsider** (walks away)
- **Defender** (does something to intervene)

The STAC Strategies:
- Stealing the Show
- Turning it Over
- Accompanying Others
- Coaching Compassion

“Facts” vs. “Myths”
True or False? When children report bullying to parents, good advice is to ignore the situation, act aggressively, or retaliate.

Why Are Parents Important?
When parents provide support to their children, their support serves as a buffer against depressive symptoms that are associated with bullying
Children tell their parents about bullying more often than they tell any other adult, including teachers
Research shows that when parents are involved in anti-bullying programs offered by the school bullying decreases.
Aim 2

• Assess the need, feasibility, acceptability, delivery format preference and immediate outcomes (e.g., knowledge, attitudes, self-efficacy, and behavioral intentions) of the STAC-T Parent Module.

• **Data Analysis**
  – Single group mixed-methods design
  – Quantitative:
    • Outcomes were fit with a linear mixed model with the fixed effect of Time (pre-test, post-test) and random effect of parents within schools
  – Qualitative:
    • Thematic, phenomenological analysis to capture participants’ experiences and inductive approach for transcript coding and data interpretation\(^{37-38}\)
Aim 2

- **Participants**
  - 23 parents from three public Title 1 middle schools in low-income, rural communities
  - 21 (91.3%) females and 3 males (8.7%) ranging in age from 30-58 years old ($M = 41.17$ and $SD = 7.17$), with reported racial/ethnic backgrounds 78.3% White, 13% Hispanic, and 8.7% Other
  - Of the 23 who completed the pre-test survey, 87% ($n = 20$) completed the post-test survey
  - Of the 20 parents who completed the immediate post-test, 60% ($n = 12$; 100% female) signed up and participated in the focus group
### Aim 2 – Immediate Post Training Outcomes

**Means, Standard Deviations, and Statistical Contrasts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Pre-Test (N = 23)</th>
<th>Post-Test (N = 20)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and Confidence Supporting “Defenders”</td>
<td>33.52 (3.90)</td>
<td>38.90 (4.36)</td>
<td>26.34</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>.001***</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence Intervening in Bullying</td>
<td>12.00 (2.00)</td>
<td>13.75 (1.21)</td>
<td>18.17</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>.001***</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort Intervening in Bullying</td>
<td>11.04 (3.67)</td>
<td>13.70 (1.84)</td>
<td>13.25</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>.001***</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Role in Bullying</td>
<td>12.17 (2.27)</td>
<td>13.95 (2.09)</td>
<td>16.65</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>.001***</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>20.44 (2.37)</td>
<td>22.50 (1.67)</td>
<td>17.87</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>.001***</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>25.39 (3.01)</td>
<td>27.75 (2.27)</td>
<td>17.35</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>.001***</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying Attitudes</td>
<td>24.22 (2.81)</td>
<td>25.65 (3.12)</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>.03*</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *p < .05, **p < .01***p < .001.
Aim 2 – Immediate Post Training Outcomes

*Intention to Support Students Using STAC Strategies in the Future*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Very Likely</th>
<th>Likely</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very Unlikely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stealing the Show</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turning it Over</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accompanying Others</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching Compassion</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aim 2 – Acceptability and Relevance

Agreement with Social Validity Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>% Agreement (n = 20)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The STAC Parent training was easy to understand.</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The STAC Parent training was useful.</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The STAC Parent training was interesting.</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The STAC Parent training information was relevant for middle school parents.</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The STAC Parent training examples of bullying were relevant for middle school teachers.</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned something from the STAC Teacher training.</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend the STAC Teacher training to other teachers at my school.</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aim 2 – Qualitative Findings

- **Positive aspects of the Parent Module**
  - Liked having a clear definition of bullying
  - Learning about the effects of bullying
  - Applicable examples
  - Overall thoroughness of the training

- **Relevance and appropriateness**
  - Useful, easy to understand, appropriate, and relevant for school and community
  - Liked multiple STAC strategies
  - Emphasis on parent-school collaboration
  - Program empowers parents to educate their adolescents about bullying
Aim 2 – Qualitative Findings

• Training feedback
  – Time constraints and need for flexibility
  – Concerns about child becoming a target of bullying
  – Need for more parent training so parents can support adolescents

• Information parents value
  – Importance of fostering open communication
  – Need for parents to serve as role-models
  – Teaching compassion

• Training need and current offerings
  – Spanish version for rural communities
  – Need for student training
  – Not receiving previous training in this area
Aim 2 – Qualitative Findings

• Potential barriers
  – Cost
  – Time
  – Internet access at home
  – Language barriers
  – Importance of buy-in

• Online programming
  – Practical – want to use phone
  – Include engaging and interactive training activities
Summary and Future Directions

• Summary
  – We developed the STAC Parent Module
  – Preliminary data demonstrates acceptability, relevance, and need and increases in immediate post-training outcomes including knowledge, confidence, self-efficacy, responsibility, and anti-bullying attitudes, as well as parents’ behavioral intentions to support their adolescents to utilize the STAC strategies

• Next Steps
  – Submit NIMHD STTR/SBIR R41/42 Fast Track (estimated date September 2024)
Questions?

Thank you!
References


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References


