Adolescents' Behaviors in Connectedness Help Reduce Bullying and Mental Health Issues

Paula L. Smith, CSM, CSPO, Doctoral Student
Dr. Rose Baker, PhD, PMP, Associate Professor, Director LT-BAS program
Department of Learning Technologies
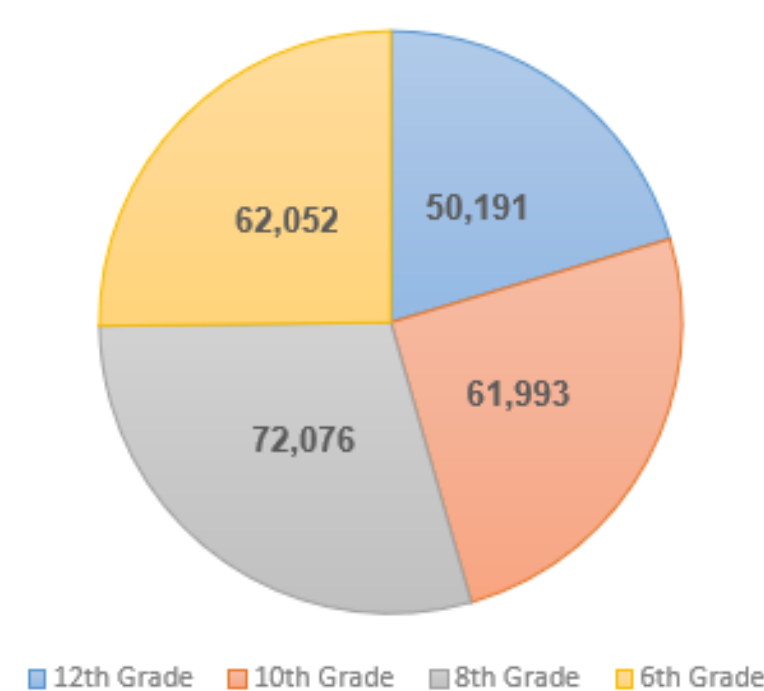**College of Information**

Abstract

These days, we read innumerable news stories on an almost daily basis concerning trauma, bullying, cyberbullying, loneliness, and teen suicide. The primary objective of a lot of school-based preventative and positive youth development programs is to strengthen the bonds between teenagers and their peers, families, and communities. Counselors, psychologists, and program reviewers for youth intervention are beginning to regard the development of connectivity as an essential outcome (Foster et al., 2017; Karcher & Sass, 2010). The purpose of the study is to investigate how important it is for teenagers to feel connected to others to lessen the number of bullying incidents and bad mental health indicators that are reported. The research uses a quantitative approach utilizing the 2021 Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS). Data collected from 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th grade students. Family, community, and school connectivity had more protective variables in their lives in males than in females and others. However, peer connectedness was stronger among the females than the males and others. The protective factors of community, family, school, and individual/peer connectedness show significance in the most influential reported incidence of bullying and adverse mental health indicators (depression and sleep habits, suicide ideation, and stress).
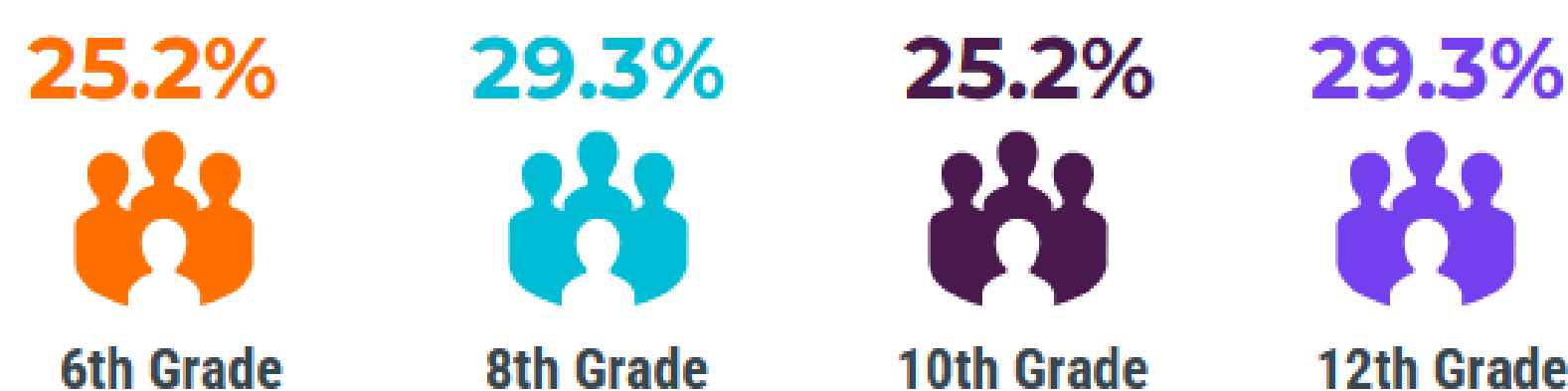
Problem Statement

The study intends to investigate the significance of family, community, school and peer connectedness in lowering the number of issues of bullying and poor mental health indicators among adolescents. Bullying and mental health problems are on the rise globally, according to Man et al. 2022 report. The significance of social bond connectivity for bullying complaints and poor mental health outcomes must be ascertained to pinpoint areas in need of preventative initiatives. These ties, which can be addressed holistically through connectivity reports, can be with classmates, parents, families, teachers, schools, health and community organizations. The research uses secondary data from the Pennsylvania Youth Survey 2021 to investigate quantitatively. Private and anonymous secondary data is provided.
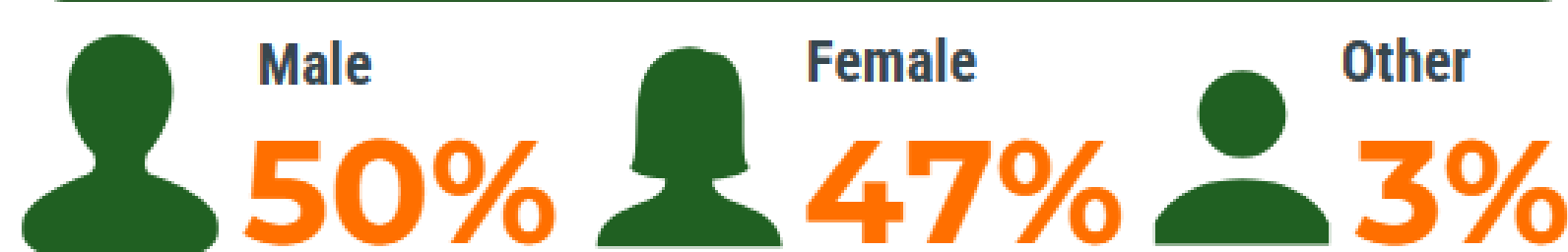
Data Collection

The data was collected from the 2021 Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS). With parental consent and support, the PAYS was administered to approximately 1,072 schools in 66 Pennsylvania counties. After removing odd-grade and invalid/dishonest responses, two hundred forty-nine thousand three hundred and twelve (249,312) surveys were included in the analysis. The PAYS secondary data was downloaded from the Pennsylvania government website using an SPSS script and transformed into IBM SPSS software for analysis.

Pie chart: 50,191 (12th Grade); 61,993 (10th Grade); 72,076 (8th Grade); 62,052 (6th Grade)
Legend: ■ 12th Grade ■ 10th Grade ■ 8th Grade ■ 6th Grade

Grade Levels

25.2% — 6th Grade
29.3% — 8th Grade
25.2% — 10th Grade
29.3% — 12th Grade

Gender

Male 50% Female 47% Other 3%

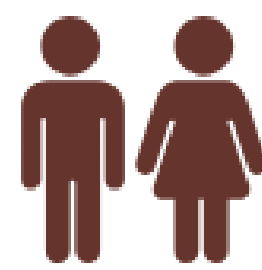## Research Questions

1. What elements of adolescents' behaviors in connectedness differ based on gender?

2. What elements of adolescents' behaviors in connectedness influence the prevalence of reports of being bullied?

3. What elements of adolescents' behaviors in connectedness most influence reported incidence of negative mental health indicators?

The elements of adolescents' behaviors in connectedness differ based on gender.

- In family connectedness, males (means =.63, .65 & .49) had more protective factors operating in their lives than the females (means =.59, .56 & .50) and others (means =.31, .28 & .26).
- In community connectedness, males (mean =.39) had more protective factors operating in their lives than females (mean =.38) and others (mean =.18).
- In school connectedness, males (means =.43 & .53) were more substantial than the females (means =.45 & .50) and others (means =.31).
- In peer connectedness, females (means =.33 & .57) were more subatantial than the males (means =.31 & .52) and others (means =.16 & .31).

Do the elements of adolescents' behaviors in connectedness influence the prevalence of reports of being bullying?

The protective factors of community, family, school, and peer connectedness show significance in the prevalence of reports of Factor 1 (depression and sleep habits), Factor 2 (suicide ideation), and Factor 4 (stress) being influenced by connection (p<0.05).

Do the elements of adolescents' behaviors in connectedness most influence the reported incidence of adverse mental health indicators?
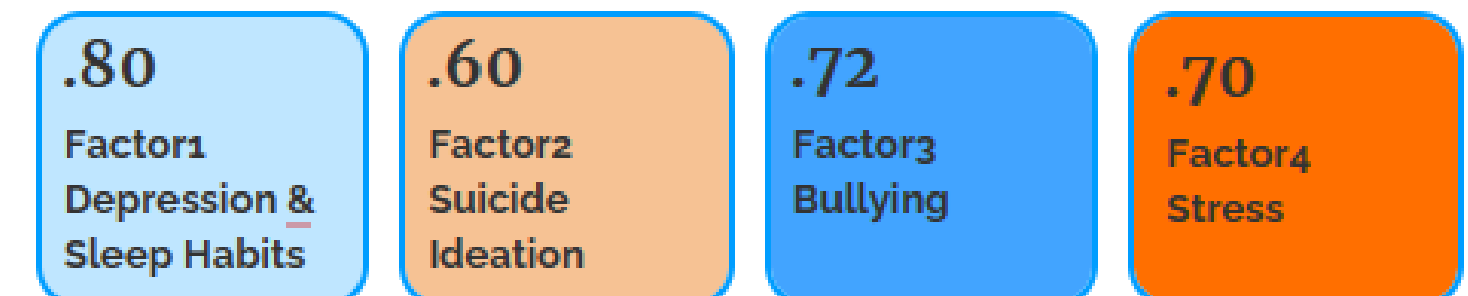
The protective factors of community, family, school, and peer connectedness show significance in the prevalence of reports of Factor1 (Depression & Sleep Habits), Factor2 (Suicide Ideation), and Factor 4 (Stress) being influenced by connection (p<0.05).

References

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Methods

The PAYS instrument will utilize 20 items from the PAYS 242 questionnaire survey concerning Bullying, Suicide Ideation, Depression, and Sleep Habits. The number of items used in the data analysis will be 17 PAYS items, two demographics, and the remaining 15 questionnaire items for the factor loadings extraction. The procedure to analyze the scale items was the options *Dimension Reduction* and then *Factor* using the IBM SPSS program. The high-order analysis of the four sub-scales represents the high order of the factors. The procedure to analyze the scale items was the options *Classify* and then *Hierarchical Cluster* using the IBM SPSS program. Using multidimensional scaling (MDS), it is possible to see how similar the individual examples in a dataset are to one another. The procedure to analyze the protective factors items was the options *Scale* and then *Reliability Analysis* using the IBM SPSS program. The Criterion-Related validity consists of the following analysis:

- One-way ANOVA analysis of variance descriptives of elements of adolescents' behaviors in connectedness differs based on gender.
- One-way ANOVA analysis variance elements of adolescents' behaviors in connectedness influences the prevalence of reports of being bullied.
- One-way ANOVA analysis variance elements of adolescents' connectedness behaviors most influences reported incidence of negative mental health indicators.

Internal Reliability Consistencies using Cronbach's Alpha Values

.80 — Factor1 Depression & Sleep Habits
.60 — Factor2 Suicide Ideation
.72 — Factor3 Bullying
.70 — Factor4 Stress

Note: DeVellis Alpha guidelines (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021, p. 130)

Conclusion

This study contributes to the lack of understanding about the protective function of school capacities in decreasing the impact of bullying and cyberbullying on mental health outcomes. Indeed, our findings could aid in the advancement of preventative measures. One important finding of parent-child interaction is vital to preventing suicidal ideation among our young. As a result, more research can be conducted on this subject. These findings highlight the possible protective impact of schools, as well as the vital need of developing strong relationships and fostering an environment of support and coherence. Furthermore, our findings show that a sense of social belonging is critical for creating a safe and healthy school environment for adolescents.

Key Findings and Future Research

- Parent-child connectedness is critical to reducing suicide ideation among our youth.
- Schools need to develop strong relationships and foster an environment of support and coherence as a critical components.
- A sense of social belonging is critical for building a safe and healthy school environment.
- Teenage loneliness is sometimes caused by social anxiety.
- Examine various sub-groups within the adolescent population.
- Investigate other risk factors and how connectedness from peers, parent/family, school and community could positively affect adjustment outcomes.