

How does Bullying Exposure Profile Membership link to Basic Psychological Needs Thwarting and Psychological Functioning? A Person-Centred Approach [abstract only]

NEWMAN, James

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Content Note

This poster covers the potentially challenging topic of bullying in competitive sports. The research was conducted via an anonymous questionnaire, which was used to assess the impact of bullying on psychological needs thwarting, well-being and performance. The findings are reported in relation to bullying group membership and the aforementioned variables.

Abstract

Objectives: Despite links to reduced self-esteem, more regular experience of negative emotions, and performance dysfunction (Jewett et al., 2019), bullying remains a relatively under-researched concept in sport. Furthermore, the theoretical propositions for how the relational and motivational aspects of bullying may predict poorer mental health outcomes and performance are untested. This is despite research establishing the impact of bullying on group membership on motivation and well-being in the educational and workplace literature. Therefore, we examined whether distinct bullying exposure groups can be identified and whether these groups differ in their perceptions of psychological needs thwarting, well-being and performance.

Methods: Three hundred and seventeen sport performers (54.3% male, 45.4% female; *Mean* = 24.98 years; *SD* = 8.84) completed measures of bullying exposure, psychological needs thwarting, well-being and subjective performance.

Results: Latent profile analysis identified four groups: 'No Bullying'; 'Some Sport Bullying'; 'Occasional Bullying' and 'Regular Bullying'. The 'No Bullying' group reported lower victimisation of bullying, lower needs thwarting and higher well-being in comparison to all other groups. Multigroup path analysis indicated a moderation effect, whereby the relationship between competence thwarting, well-being and subjective performance was weaker for the 'No Bullying' exposure group, in comparison to the bullying exposure group.

Conclusions: As such, sport environments that enable bullying exposure carry a substantial risk of frustrating athletes' basic psychological needs and well-being. From an applied perspective, this highlights the value in monitoring bullying exposure, given the impact it can have on competitive participants' sporting experience and reinforces the need for high-quality education programmes to address this behaviour.