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The Preventing Relational Aggression in Schools Everyday Program: A Preliminary Evaluation of Acceptability and Impact

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Abstract

Despite recent research suggesting that relationally aggressive behaviors occur frequently and may lead to physically aggressive actions within urban school settings, there has been little prior research to develop and evaluate relational aggression prevention efforts within the urban schools. The current article describes the development and preliminary evaluation of the Preventing Relational Aggression in Schools Everyday (PRAISE) Program. PRAISE is a 20-session classroom-based universal prevention program, designed to be appropriate and responsive to the needs of youth within the urban school context. Results suggest strong acceptability for the program and feasibility of implementation. Further, the program was especially beneficial for girls. For instance, girls in classrooms randomly assigned to the PRAISE Program demonstrated higher levels of knowledge for social information processing and anger management techniques and lower levels of relational aggression following treatment as compared to similar girls randomly assigned to a no-treatment control condition. Further, relationally aggressive girls exhibited similar benefits from the program (greater knowledge and lower levels of relational aggression) plus lower levels of overt aggression following treatment as compared to relationally aggressive girls within the control classrooms. In contrast, the program was not associated with improvements for boys across most measures. The significance and implications of the findings for research and practice are discussed.

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