

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Extracurricular activities and bullying perpetration and victimisation in early and middle adolescence

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Abstract

The present study examined the association between adolescents' extracurricular activities and bullying perpetration and victimisation. The sample was drawn from the 2016 National Survey of Children's Health dataset. Analyses included descriptive statistics and logistic regression for the early adolescent and middle adolescent groups. Among early adolescents, sports were negatively associated with victimisation. Participation in clubs/organisations, organised activities or lessons, and community services were negatively associated, while employment was positively related to bullying perpetration. Among middle adolescents, all extracurricular activities were negatively related to victimisation. As for bullying perpetration, organised activities or lessons and community services were negatively associated with bullying. The study highlights the potential for sport and extracurricular involvement as ways to possibly deter bullying perpetration and victimisation. Future research should consider these associations longitudinally.

Keywords: Bullying; extracurricular activities; sports; victimisation; volunteer

Bullying, which comes in direct (physical, verbal, social, sexual), indirect (gossiping, spreading rumours, social exclusion), and cyber forms (Reisen et al., 2019), has been a public health concern, prompting a rapid increase in the development of antibullying programs. Many programs have included teacher training and classroom rules on bullying (Farrington & Ttofi, 2009). However, researchers have recently explored whether organised activities or extracurricular activities, such as in-school and out-of-school sports, clubs, and community service activities, might play a role in resolving bullying situations. This line of inquiry is important as the benefits of participation in extracurricular activities and in school performances on children's behaviour and socioemotional adjustment have been documented (Metsapelto & Pulkkinen, 2012; Molinuevo et al., 2010). Evidence shows that participation in extracurricular activities is linked to higher self-worth and social and academic self-concept (Blomfield & Barber, 2011) and the maintenance of friendships (Schaefer et al., 2011). Extracurricular activities provide adolescents with contexts for developing their abilities, strengths, and friendships (Schaefer et al., 2011). They are also sustainable because activities are integrated into schools and do not require the large amount of time, resources and personnel that antibullying

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programs require (Haegele et al., 2020). They are well integrated into schools (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005). Given the benefits of extracurricular activities, it is probable that participation in such activities might lower the risk of bullying perpetration and victimisation (Kendrick et al., 2012).

Extracurricular Activities and Bullying Perpetration

A limited number of studies have investigated the significant role of extracurricular activities in addressing and preventing adolescent bullying behaviour (Carney & Nottis, 2008; Riese et al., 2015). A pilot study conducted by Carney and Nottis (2008) explored the utility of the Bully Busters program in an extracurricular activity (i.e., summer day camp) and found that bullying and disciplinary referrals decreased over the summer among the participants in the extracurricular activities. They suggested that the Bully Busters Program, which included extracurricular activities and provided supervised and structured activities, would be a suitable component of school-based anti-bullying programs (Carney & Nottis, 2008; Holt et al., 2013). Another study by Riese et al. (2015) also reported from a nationally representative sample of children (aged 6–17) that students who participated in sports and nonsport activities showed a greater reduction of bullying than nonparticipants. In contrast, Haegele et al.'s (2020) findings revealed that participation in extracurricular activities was not related to lower odds of bullying among students with disabilities.

Extracurricular Activities and Bullying Victimization

Existing empirical studies have also examined whether participation in extracurricular activities is negatively related to bullying victimisation (Bills, 2020a; Cecen-Celik & Keith, 2019; Haegele et al., 2020; Lehman, 2017; Peguero, 2008, 2009). However, these studies have been fraught with inconsistent findings. Haegele et al. (2020) found that extracurricular activities were associated with a decreased risk of victimisation while Bills (2020a) showed no such association. Bills (2020a) found that although adolescents with disabilities experienced victimisation at a higher rate than their peers without disabilities, participation in extracurricular activities was not related to victimisation risk.

On the other hand, some scholarly findings seem to suggest that extracurricular activities could serve as a protective factor against victimisation, as adolescents who participate in such activities may develop social skills or establish supportive relationships with peers and adults, which can diminish their risk of being bullied by their peers (McConnell & Erath, 2018) and the adverse outcomes of victimisation. For example, Bills (2020b) found that students with disabilities who had participated in sports-related extracurricular activities were less likely to report victimisation related to schoolwork, friendship, and self-esteem. McConnell and Erath's (2018) findings from a sample of 123 5th and 6th graders also showed a positive association between victimisation and depressive symptoms in those who were not committed to an extracurricular activity.

Other researchers — for instance, Peguero (2008, 2009) — have documented that youth who actively participated in certain extracurricular activities, more specifically nonsport-related activities, such as music, drama or student government, had a greater likelihood of victimisation harm. Peguero (2008) postulated that the positive association might be due to the perceived notion that students who participate in such activities are 'geeks' or 'nerds', and therefore more likely suitable targets of bullying. Also, extra time spent in school for extracurricular activities purpose can increase opportunities for bullying victimisation. Similarly, Cecen-Celik and Keith's (2019) study, which drew from routine activity theory and social bond theory, also suggested that sports-related extracurricular activities were not associated with a decreased risk of victimisation, although nonsports-related activities significantly increased the risk. Peguero (2008, 2009) and Cecen-Celik and Keith (2019) also support the routine activity theory, which proposes that adolescents in high-risk situations (e.g., certain extracurricular activities) have higher odds of being victimised by their peers as they have greater interactions with

motivated offenders. Through certain extracurricular activities, victims of bullying have frequent contact with potential offenders (e.g., other participants) due to the absence of capable guardians (infrequent supervision by an adult), which would make them a suitable target of offenders (Cohen *et al.*, 1981).

The relationship between extracurricular activities and victimisation also appears to be inconsistent when sex differences were considered. For instance, Lehman's (2017) study, which examined sex differences in the association between extracurricular activities and victimisation of U.S. high school students, showed that females did not report experiencing victimisation for participating in competitive sports. However, these students reported feeling bullied by their peers when they supported gender equality in athletics. Also, Lehman and Dumais (2017) found that although there were no sex differences in victimisation based on participation in sports, males who participated in club-based and academic-oriented extracurricular activities (e.g., drama classes) were more likely to report victimisation.

The Present Study

Extracurricular activities have been implicated in a limited number of empirical studies on bullying. However, one area that seems not to have been explored is whether certain types of nonschool-related extracurricular activities, such as part-time employment, might also be related to bullying perpetration and victimisation. Part-time employment is common among U.S. adolescents. According to Child Trends, in 2018, 50% of all adolescents aged 16–24 were employed either full-time or part-time (Child Trends, 2020). Adolescents who are employed tend to have many opportunities to develop social and communication skills, confidence, and a sense of responsibility, which can decrease their risk of bullying perpetration and victimisation. Indeed, studies have documented a negative association between part-time employment and risky behaviours (e.g., Lee & Ju, 2010). In contrast, youth who are employed may also experience psychological, financial, academic and interpersonal stressors, which can increase their odds of bullying perpetration and victimisation. As documented, employment during the school year is associated with lower investment in schoolwork, greater psychological distress, delinquency, and substance use (Lee *et al.*, 2017; Monahan *et al.*, 2011).

The present study extends the previous findings and examines the association between adolescents' participation in various types of extracurricular activities and bullying perpetration and victimisation. The study focuses specifically on early adolescents (aged 10–14) and middle adolescents (aged 15–17). In early adolescence, youth begin to make their own decisions about how to spend their time after school, which has important implications for their future goals. Involvement in extracurricular activities is particularly important as adolescents individuate from their parents and seek support from caring adults (e.g., teachers). Also, establishing close relationships with peers and feeling connected are especially important during adolescence (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008). Compared to adolescents in elementary or primary schools, adolescents in middle and high schools have increased opportunities to participate in various types of extracurricular activities.

In addition, the present study relies on measures for the variables that were derived from parental reports. Caregivers can be viable sources of information concerning their children because they often observe their children in various locations (Wrobel & Lachar, 1998). Further, given that parental involvement has been considered in bullying prevention efforts (Axford *et al.*, 2015), caregivers can be a vital source of information for researchers, as well as school officials or practitioners who frequently discuss bullying with the caregivers.

The present study addresses the following research questions: (a) Are adolescents less likely to bully others or become victims of bullying when they participate in extracurricular activities? (b) Are the associations between participation in various types of extracurricular activities and bullying perpetration and victimisation similar for early adolescents and middle adolescents?

Method

Data and Sample

Data were drawn from the 2016 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH), a nationally representative survey sponsored by the U.S. Maternal and Child Health Bureau in partnership with the National Center for Health Statistics, Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative, and a National Technical Expert Panel. The NSCH examined the children's demographics, physical/mental/developmental problems, wellbeing, parental health, school, and neighborhood. Telephone surveys have been conducted every four years, which later transitioned to an online/mail-based survey from 2016 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Households were randomly selected and were mailed an invitation to fill out a household screener (Danielson et al., 2018). The data collection consisted of two phases: (1) an initial household screener assessed children, their sociodemographic characteristics, and their health care needs; and (2) age-specific questions, completed by the caregiver of one randomly selected child per household (Kogan et al., 2018). Respondents were caregivers of children who were 0–17 years old across the 50 states and the District of Columbia from June 2016 to February 2017. The proportion of households with children that completed the survey was 69.7%. The 2016 data were also weighted to represent the U.S. population.

The total sample was 50,212, and the sample size for the study was 35,718 caregivers of children (aged 6–12 years) and adolescents (aged 13–17 years) who had completed all the requested data on the focal child's age, sex, and race/ethnicity. The overall weighted response rate was 40.7%, and the proportion of screened households with a child that completed a child-specific questionnaire was 69.7%. A nonresponse bias analysis was conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, which concluded that although responses tended to be higher in geographic locations where income was higher, there was no strong evidence of nonresponse bias (Whitney et al., 2019).

Of the participants, 51.0% were male and 49.0% were female, and the mean age was 12.14 years ($SD = 3.45$). Over three-fourths (77.7%) were White, followed by 6.4% Black, and 15.9% other racial/ethnic groups (see Table 1).

Measures

Bullying perpetration was measured with a single survey item that asked the caregiver: 'This child bullies others, picks on them, or excludes them.' Response options were *definitely true* (1), *somewhat true* (2), and *not true* (3). Responses were further dichotomised to indicate the exhibition of bullying. 'Definitely true' and 'somewhat true' were categorised as *not true* (0) and *yes* (1). 'Not true' was recoded as 'no'. This item was reported by a parent or caregiver, so the measure reflects parents' or caregivers' awareness of their focal child's and adolescents' bullying. However, Lebrun-Harris et al. (2019) and Rupp and McCoy (2019) used this measure with the same dataset.

Bullying victimisation was measured with a single item that asked the caregiver: 'This child is bullied, picked on, or excluded by other children.' Response options were *definitely true* (1), *somewhat true* (2), and *not true* (3). Responses were further dichotomised. 'Definitely true' and 'somewhat true' were categorised as *not true* (0) and *yes* (1). 'Not true' was recoded as 'no'. This item was reported by a parent or caregiver, so the measure reflects parents' or caregivers' awareness of their focal child's and adolescents' victimisation. However, this measure was used in Lebrun-Harris et al.'s (2019) and Whitney et al.'s (2019) study, which utilised the same dataset.

Participation in sports teams/lessons was measured with one item asking the caregiver: 'Was (the child) on a sports team or did (he/she) take sports lessons after school or on weekends?' Response options were *no* (0) and *yes* (1).

Participation in nonsport clubs or organisations was measured with one item asking the caregiver: 'Did (he/she) participate in any clubs or organisations after school or on weekends?' Response options were *no* (0) and *yes* (1).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Early Adolescent and Middle Adolescent Groups

Variables	Early adolescents (<i>N</i> = 14,592)		Middle adolescents (<i>N</i> = 11,502)	
	%	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	%	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Child characteristics				
Age		12.10 (1.41)		16.03 (.81)
Sex				
Male	50.8		50.7	
Female	49.2		49.3	
Race/ethnicity				
White	77.2		79.7	
Black	6.6		6.0	
Other	16.2		14.3	
Family economic hardship		.36(.73)		.29 (.65)
Parental employment	77.8		78.6	
Sport				
Clubs/organisations		.70 (.46)		.61 (.48)
Organised activities or lessons		.63 (.48)		.65 (.48)
Community services		.58 (.49)		.47 (.50)
Employment (paid work)		.51 (.50)		.66 (.47)
Bullying perpetration		.24 (.43)		.62 (.49)
Bullying victimisation		.06 (.24)		.04 (.20)
		.25 (.44)		.19 (.39)

Participation in organised activities or lessons was measured with one item asking the caregiver: ‘Did (he/she) participate in any other organised activities or lessons, such as music, dance, language, or other arts?’ Response options were *no* (0) and *yes* (1).

Participation in community activities or volunteer was measured with one item asking the caregiver: ‘Did (he/ she) participate in any type of community service or volunteer work at school, church, or in the community?’ Response options were *no* (0) and *yes* (1).

Participation in regular employment was measured with one item asking the caregiver: ‘Did (he/she) have Any paid work, including regular jobs as well as babysitting, cutting grass, or other occasional work?’ Response options were *no* (0) and *yes* (1).

Covariates included the child’s age, sex, race/ethnicity, family economic hardship, and parental employment. A *child’s age* was a continuous variable, while other variables were categorical variables. *Children’s sex* was categorised as male or female. *The child’s race/ethnicity* was categorised as (a) White, (b) Black, and (c) Other races and ethnicities. We created four indicators of *family economic hardship*: cash assistance from a government welfare program, food stamps, free or reduced-cost breakfasts or lunches at school, and benefits from the women, infants, and children (WIC) program, and each was coded as *no* (0) and *yes* (1). We also computed a total family economic hardship score, with possible scores from 0 to 4. *Parental employment* was measured as being employed at least 50 out of the past 52 weeks and the response option was coded as *no* (0) and *yes* (1).

The reliability and validity of the instruments have been reported in several studies (e.g., Jackson *et al.*, 2019; Riese *et al.*, 2015).

Table 2. Bullying Perpetration, Victimization and Extracurricular Activities of Early Adolescents

	Victims			Bullies		
	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>OR</i>	95% <i>CI</i>	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>OR</i>	95% <i>CI</i>
Age	-.00 (.02)	1.00	.97, 1.03	.00 (.03)	1.00	.95, 1.06
Sex (Boy)	-.07 (.04)	.94	.86, 1.02	-.21 (.08)**	.81	.70, .95
Black	.27 (.06)***	1.31	1.17, 1.47	-.10 (.10)	.90	.74, 1.10
Other	-.01 (.10)	1.00	.82, 1.21	.27 (.15)	1.31	.97, 1.77
Family economic hardship	.24 (.03)***	1.27	1.20, 1.35	.34 (.05)***	1.41	1.29, 1.54
Parental employment	-.16 (.05)**	.85	.78, .94	.05 (.09)	1.05	.88, 1.26
Sport	-.64 (.05)***	.53	.48, .58	-.08 (.09)	.92	.78, 1.09
Clubs/organisations	-.04 (.05)	.96	.87, 1.05	-.19 (.87)*	.83	.70, .98
Organised activities or lessons	-.02 (.04)	.98	.90, 1.07	-.29 (.08)***	.75	.64, .88
Community services	-.08 (.05)	.92	.84, 1.00	-.29 (.08)**	.75	.64, .88
Employment (paid)	-.03 (.05)	.97	.87, 1.07	.23 (.09)*	1.26	1.05, 1.51
Constant	-.68 (.20)			-2.48 (.36)		
-2LL	14,443.11			5652.03		
Nagelkerke <i>R</i> ²	.05			.04		

Note: *N* = 14,592; *OR*= odds ratio; -2LL = -2 log likelihood.

p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

Analytic Techniques

Analyses consisted of descriptive statistics and multivariate logistic regression. Sampling weights, which were adjusted for nonresponse, noncoverage, and nontelephone households, were included in the NSCH dataset (Segal et al., 2016). First, descriptive statistics of sociodemographic characteristics, extracurricular activities, bullying perpetration, and bullying victimisation were examined. Second, logistic regression was used to examine whether participating in extracurricular activities was associated with bullying perpetration and victimisation, controlling for the covariates. The model's goodness of fit was assessed using the Hosmer-Lemeshow test, which indicated that the model predicting bullying perpetration and victimisation was not significantly different from the awareness of caregivers who reported bullying perpetration and victimisation. Finally, multivariate logistic regression was conducted for the early adolescent (ages 10–14 years) and the middle adolescent (ages 15–17 years) groups. SPSS v. 24.0 was used.

Results

Results of the descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. Table 2 presents the results of the regression analysis of the early adolescent group. Our findings suggest that the independent variables were associated with bullying victimisation, -2LL = 14,443.11, $\chi^2 = (11, N = 14,592) = 451.76$, $R^2 = .05$, $p < .001$, and perpetration, -2LL = 5,652.03, $\chi^2 = (11, N = 14,592) = 181.60$, $R^2 = .04$, $p < .001$. Black ($OR = 1.31$; 95% *CI* [1.17, 1.47]; $p < .001$) and family economic hardship ($OR = 1.27$; 95% *CI* [1.20, 1.35]; $p < .001$) were associated with bullying victimisation. Parental employment ($OR = .85$; 95% *CI* [.78, .94]; $p < .01$) and sports teams/lessons ($OR = .53$; 95% *CI* [.48, .58]; $p < .001$) were negatively associated with bullying victimisation. However, clubs/organisations, organised activities or lessons, community services and employment were no longer significant.

Table 3. Bullying Perpetration, Victimization and Extracurricular Activities of Middle Adolescents

	Victims			Bullies		
	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>OR</i>	95% <i>CI</i>	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>OR</i>	95% <i>CI</i>
Age	-.13 (.03)***	.88	.82, .93	-.00 (.06)	1.00	.88, 1.13
Sex (Boy)	.32 (.05)***	1.37	1.24, 1.52	-.13 (.10)	.88	.72, 1.08
Black	.33 (.08)***	1.39	1.19, 1.62	-.11 (.14)	.90	.68, 1.18
Other	-.00 (.13)	1.00	.77, 1.29	-.25 (.24)	.78	.49, 1.25
Family economic hardship	.22 (.04)***	1.24	1.15, 1.34	.25 (.07)***	1.29	1.13, 1.47
Parental employment	-.15 (.06)*	.86	.76, .97	-.23 (.12)*	.79	.63, 1.00
Sport	-.59 (.06)***	.56	.50, .62	-.21 (.11)	.81	.66, 1.01
Clubs/organisations	-.13 (.06)*	.88	.77, .99	-.21 (.12)	.81	.64, 1.03
Organised activities or lessons	-.13 (.06)*	.88	.79, .98	-.31 (.11)**	.73	.58, .91
Community services	-.17 (.06)**	.85	.75, .95	-.37 (.12)**	.69	.55, .87
Employment (paid)	-.12 (.06)*	.89	.80, .99	.07 (.11)	1.08	.87, 1.33
Constant	.94 (.53)			-2.35 (1.04)		
-2LL	9,582.31			3393.92		
Nagelkerke <i>R</i> ²	.06			.03		

Note: *N* = 11,502; *OR* = odds ratio; -2LL = -2 log likelihood.

p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

For bullying perpetration, boys (*OR* = .81; 95% *CI* [.71, .93]; *p* < .01) were 19% less likely to bully others compared to girls. Family economic hardship (*OR* = 1.41; 95% *CI* [1.29, 1.54]; *p* < .001) was significant for bullying perpetration. In terms of extracurricular activities, early adolescents who participated in clubs/organisations (*OR* = .83; 95% *CI* [.70, .98]; *p* < .05), organised activities or lessons (*OR* = .75; 95% *CI* [.64, .88]; *p* < .001), community activities or volunteer (*OR* = .75; 95% *CI* [.64, .88]; *p* < .01) also reported fewer risk of bullying compared to those who did not participate. Early adolescents who were employed (*OR* = 1.26; 95% *CI* [1.05, 1.51]; *p* < .05) were 26% more likely to be bullies.

Table 3 includes the results of the regression analyses for the middle adolescent group. Victimization, 2LL = 9,582.31, $\chi^2 = (11, N = 11,502) = 369.65$, *R*² = .06, *p* < .001, and bullying perpetration, 2LL = 3,393.92, $\chi^2 = (11, N = 11,502) = 96.87$, *R*² = .03, *p* < .001, were statistically significant. In terms of bullying victimisation, age (*OR* = .88; 95% *CI* [.82, .93]; *p* < .001), boys (*OR* = 1.37; 95% *CI* [1.24, 1.52]; *p* < .001), Black (*OR* = 1.39; 95% *CI* [1.19, 1.62]; *p* < .001), family economic hardship (*OR* = 1.24; 95% *CI* [1.15, 1.34]; *p* < .001), parental employment (*OR* = .86; 95% *CI* [.76, .97]; *p* < .05) were significant. All extracurricular activities were negatively associated with bullying victimisation (see Table 3).

In terms of bullying perpetration, those with family economic hardship (*OR* = 1.29; 95% *CI* [1.13, 1.47]; *p* < .001) were 29% more likely to be bullies. Parental employment (*OR* = .79; 95% *CI* [.63, 1.00]; *p* < .05), organised activities or lessons (*OR* = .73; 95% *CI* [.58, .91]; *p* < .01), and community activities or volunteer (*OR* = .69; 95% *CI* [.55, .87]; *p* < .01) were negatively associated with bullying perpetration.

Discussion

The present study investigated how various types of sports and nonsports-related extracurricular activities are associated with bullying perpetration and victimisation of early and middle adolescent

groups. Among early adolescents, only sports showed negative associations with victimisation, which was similar to Bills' (2020b) findings. Early adolescence is a developmental period in which the body rapidly experiences significant changes, and for adolescents during this period, participating in sports can facilitate the development of self-confidence and social skills, which potentially would reduce victimisation risks. We also found that early adolescents who participate in clubs/organisations, organised activities or lessons, or community services are less likely to perpetrate bullying, although, to our surprise, those who are employed were more likely to bully others. To our knowledge, research has not yet documented the relevance of adolescent employment in bullying. However, youth during the early adolescent period are likely to experience numerous stressors as they transition to a new and unfamiliar school setting, and those who are employed might experience additional stressors that can trigger behavioural problems, including aggression.

For middle adolescents, those who participated in sports, clubs/organisations, organised activities or lessons, community services, or employment were found to be less at risk of victimisation. Concerning bullying perpetration, our findings suggest that participation in organised activities or lessons and community services were negatively associated with bullying. These findings are in line with prior studies that also reported negative associations between extracurricular activities and bullying perpetration and victimisation (Carney & Nottis, 2008; Haegele et al., 2020; Riese et al., 2015). Benefits of participation in extracurricular activities, such as higher levels of psychosocial maturity, social competence, better relationships with peers, and emotional adjustment, are documented in the empirical literature (Metsapelto & Pulkkinen, 2014). Such benefits might explain why extracurricular activities potentially lower children's and adolescents' odds of bullying perpetration and victimisation. Students who are involved in extracurricular activities have many opportunities to develop social competence and interact with prosocial peers with similar goals, which can inhibit bullying perpetration and victimisation risks.

Taken together, the present study, which consisted of a nationally representative sample of youth during early and middle adolescent periods, provides evidence of the significance of extracurricular activities in bullying, which occurs frequently in middle and high schools. Findings advance extant research on the relation between extracurricular activities and the risk of bullying perpetration and victimisation. While studies reveal that participation in extracurricular activities serves to be a protective factor against bullying perpetration and victimisation, an unexpected finding from this study is that on the role of employment. As U.S. adolescents are increasingly seeking part-time employment (Child Trends, 2020), more research is needed to understand the relationship between employment with bullying perpetration and victimisation outcomes. Adolescents who are employed at an early age may have frequent contact with delinquent peers at their workplace, which could increase the risk of bullying. Further research is needed to validate this hypothesis.

Study findings further advance the research on extracurricular activities, bullying and victimisation by clarifying the roles of sex and racial differences. Extant studies have yielded inconsistent findings in accounting for the relations between extracurricular activities and with bullying perpetration and victimisation; sex and racial/ethnicity differences have not been the specific focus in prior research (Bills, 2020a; Carney & Nottis, 2008; Haegele et al., 2020; Peguero, 2008, 2009; Riese et al., 2015). However, this study found that child's sex and race/ethnicity can differentiate their experiences of victimisation within extracurricular activities. Findings provide insight into the ways in which demographic characteristics function as a risk or protective factor against bullying and victimisation. Continued research is needed to shed insights into the ways in which demographics may account for differentiation in outcomes associated with extracurricular activities, bullying and victimisation. It is also critical that other demographic factors, such as socioeconomic status and social-contextual status (e.g., urbanity vs. rurality), be considered in understanding the linkages among extracurricular activities, bullying and victimisation. Understanding the ways demographics relate to outcomes within extracurricular participation can help clarify the inconsistent findings in the extant literature. Attention to antibullying strategies has been on school activities, and more research is needed to develop antibullying strategies in out-of-school settings.

Limitations and Implications for Research

While our study has important implications for the research on extracurricular activities, bullying and victimisation, several limitations of the study need to be acknowledged, which have major implications for future research. Child self-reported behaviour was not collected in the NSCH and was not available for analyses, which was a limitation, as adolescence is a developmental stage when it is normative for individuals to be autonomous and independent from their caregivers. Discrepancies in interrater ratings on problem behaviours are widely documented in the literature (De Los Reyes & Kazdin, 2005). Yet, measures relying on parental reports have been widely used in several studies to evaluate children's bullying perpetration and victimisation (Haegele *et al.*, 2020; Lebrun-Harris *et al.*, 2020; Whitney *et al.*, 2019). Further, in a study consisting of 6- to 11-year-old children using the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, maternal reports that their child 'bullies or is cruel or mean to others' showed validity in comparison to a validated externalising behaviour scale (i.e., the antisocial score was 1.3 *SD* higher for bullies reported by caregivers than nonbullies, $p < .001$; Zimmerman *et al.*, 2005). Many adolescents continue to rely on their caregivers for support, and caregivers' reports are one of many ways to assess their subjective experiences in bullying perpetration and victimisation of adolescents. That being said, future research should consider the interlinkages of extracurricular participation, bullying and victimisation from students' perspectives. Moreover, assessing adolescent bullying should include data from several informants, including self-reports, peers and teachers, in addition to caregivers, which would significantly increase the reliability of the findings.

A single-item indicator for bullying perpetration and victimisation represents another limitation of the study. Measures of bullying and victimisation in the 2016 NSCH dataset are based on a single item from the caregiver's perspective. The research draws attention to the broad range of bullying behaviours (Reisen *et al.*, 2019), and future research should consider the specific impacts of extracurricular activities across the different dimensions of bullying.

The cross-sectional study design is another serious limitation as the causal association between children's participation in extracurricular activities and bullying perpetration and victimisation could not be determined. Because the study relied on cross-sectional data as opposed to utilising multiple waves of the survey, and because the variables did not specify a timeframe, the temporal sequence of the relationship between extracurricular activities and children's involvement in bullying cannot be assumed.

Also, the relationship between extracurricular activities and children's involvement in bullying may reflect bidirectionality. For instance, are bullies or victims less inclined to participate in extracurricular activities? Such relationships should also be explored further with longitudinal study designs, especially with multiple waves.

Practice and Policy Implications

This study has clear implications for school and community offerings and policies associated with extracurricular activities. This study supports the benefits of extracurricular activity involvement. Thus, implementing and sustaining increased offerings of extracurricular activities to students are encouraged; however, it is also acknowledged that resources associated with such an initiative are an important aspect to be considered. Prior research demonstrates three clear challenges that school administrators and community stakeholders should consider in any pursuit to facilitate extracurricular activities for youth.

First, at the community level, the situational and environmental context in which organisations are embedded are not similar across communities. In other words, urban communities have an increased likelihood that youth must navigate and avoid disorder, crime, violence and/or potentially dangerous environments to participate in extracurricular activities compared to suburban communities (Eisman *et al.*, 2018; Peguero *et al.*, 2016). Second, at the school level, the ability to offer a wide variety of extracurricular activities as well as the associated adult supervision to ensure the safety and wellbeing of

students with such participation is not equitable across distinct types of contexts (Allen et al., 2018; Farb & Matjasko, 2012). In other words, suburban schools have significantly more academic extracurricular activity offerings such as band, government, clubs and the like, and increased adult supervision and volunteers to engage in such youth activities. Third, at the individual youth level, there are disparities associated with the participation and treatment of youth in extracurricular activities. Prior research demonstrates that adult, as well as peer interactions, differ by youth's sex, race/ethnicity, immigrant and family socioeconomic status, which can result in exacerbating existing inequality for already marginalised youth (Peguero, 2010; Simpkins et al., 2013). Providing opportunities for extracurricular activity participation for all youth can reduce the incidence of bullying in school. More importantly, it is a fundamental pursuit of educational equity.

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