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Adolescent bullying and personality: An adaptive approach

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Abstract

From an evolutionary perspective, bullying behavior may be viewed as adaptive in nature. Moreover, as bullies may utilize both prosocial and aggressive means to achieve desired goals, they likely exhibit specific personality traits that allow for this bistrategic approach to survival. Therefore, after accounting for general aggression levels, bullying should be negatively associated with personality traits such as fairness and modesty (Honesty—Humility), but unrelated to traits such as forgiveness and tolerance (Agreeableness). Additionally, the intentional nature of the behavior suggests that bullying should be positively associated with instrumental, but not reactive, aggression. A sample of 310 adolescents completed measures of bullying, personality, and instrumental/reactive aggression. Results supported the hypotheses and are interpreted from an adaptive perspective.

Highlights

—° From an evolutionary perspective, bullies may utilize both prosocial and aggressive

From an evolutionary perspective, bullies may utilize both prosocial and aggressive methods. Bullies should possess personality traits that reflect such an adaptation. We found that bullies were low in Honesty-Humility, but not in Agreeableness. Thus bullies' personality fits with an adaptive, bistrategic view of bullying.



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Keywords

Bullying; Personality; Adolescents; HEXACO; Evolution

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