Speak up or stay silent: Can teacher responses towards bullying predict victimized students' disclosure of victimization?

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Abstract

Many children who are victimized by their peers do not tell their teachers. Subsequently, teacher intervention and support are not likely to take place. To investigate the role teachers can play to promote disclosure of victimized students, we examined (1) the prevalence of disclosure to teachers, and (2) the extent to which teachers' responses towards bullying longitudinally predict victimized students' disclosure to their teacher. Participants were 874 Dutch primary school students (Grades 4-6) who reported being victimized, and their teachers. Of the victimized students, 76.8% reported that they disclosed to someone and 58.3% of them told their teacher. Multilevel binary logistic regression among all victimized students and a subsample of persistently victimized students ($n = 316$) revealed that neither teacher-reported active intervention nor passive intervention at T1 predicted victimized students' likelihood to disclose to their teacher at T2. Implications for future research and for practice are discussed.

Keywords: victimization; bullying; disclosure; teacher responses; longitudinal design

Speak up or Stay Silent: Can Teacher Responses Towards Bullying Predict

Victimized Students' Disclosure of Victimization?

One in ten students reports to have been repeatedly bullied at school during the past months (Inchley et al., 2020). Being bullied can be a highly distressing experience for children and adolescents, with potential long-lasting negative consequences for social relationships, physical and mental health (e.g., McDougall & Vaillancourt, 2015). Given this dramatic impact, it is alarming that many victimized students do not share their experiences with others. From 20% to 33% of victimized early adolescents does not tell anyone (e.g., Blomqvist et al., 2020). Moreover, bystanders witnessing a bullying situation at school are often hesitant to tell teachers (Oliver & Candappa, 2007) and bullying frequently takes place outside of the teachers' view (Fekkes et al., 2005). Because awareness of a bullying incident is a prerequisite for intervention and support, reports by victimized students are often teachers' only source of information.

Schools often encourage students to contact adults in case of problems (Bjereld, 2018). Because of their close proximity to all students and their responsibility to create a safe classroom climate (Brendgen & Troop-Gordon, 2015), teachers are unique persons for victimized students to turn to. This is especially important because teachers often struggle to identify victimized students (Oldenburg et al., 2016). However, victimized students tell parents and friends more often than teachers (e.g., Blomqvist et al., 2020). Feeling confident to tell teachers is crucial though, as teachers appear to be more successful than parents and classmates in stopping bullying (Fekkes et al., 2005) and in some countries even have a legal obligation to do so.

For victimized students, the decision to disclose to a teacher is a complex trade-off between potential costs and losses. First, they may be anxious that their situation will worsen when they tell their teacher (e.g., Shaw et al., 2019). Further, students may be ashamed,

convinced they will not be taken seriously or even will be blamed by teachers for provoking or not standing up to victimization (Bjereld, 2018). In turn, teachers may misinterpret non-disclosure by a victimized student as the absence of need for support, while the student might actually have that need. This begs the question to what extent teachers can facilitate disclosure.

To improve our understanding and (preventive) intervention to promote victimized students' disclosure, we urgently need more prevalence studies and longitudinal research investigating whether teachers can influence victimized students' disclosure. Therefore, this study aims to (1) outline the prevalence of victimized students' disclosure to teachers, and (2) investigate whether teachers' responses towards bullying predict victimized students' disclosure to their teacher. Once we know under which conditions victimized students are more likely to approach their teacher for help and support, we can adequately train teachers to create a safe environment in which victimized students feel confident to speak up.

Teachers' Role and Responses Towards Bullying

Attachment theory has often been used as a framework to explain teachers' role in students' adjustment (Bowlby, 1982; Verschueren & Koomen, 2012). According to this theory, teachers can serve as a safe haven for their students and as a secure base to explore their environment from. Although teachers do not have the exclusive and long-lasting bond that parents and children have, they are around for one or multiple years and can serve as "ad hoc" attachment figures to whom students can turn for help and comfort in times of distress. Research already showed that a warm teacher-student relationship can buffer against negative consequences of victimization (Troop-Gordon & Kuntz, 2013). Based on this framework, it can be assumed that teachers can promote victimized students' disclosure to them by creating a safe environment.

This study focused on teacher responses towards bullying as potential incentives for victimized students' to disclose. When teachers see or hear about bullying situations in school, their subsequent response and its effectiveness are viewed by students. When teachers display active responses towards bullying incidents (e.g., by separating students involved), they may convey a message to victimized students that they are there to stop bullying and re-install security once they discover it. Accordingly, Cortes and Kochenderfer-Ladd (2014) found that students who believed that their teacher would actively intervene reported more willingness to disclose to their teacher. Conversely, little or passive teacher intervention (e.g., promoting avoidance of bullies) may be perceived by students as if a teacher does not care or cannot protect them against bullying (e.g., Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Accordingly, this signal may not create the safe environment that the victimized students need and, in turn, make them more likely to remain silent. However, most studies so far used hypothetical bullying scenarios. As such, the effect of teachers' self-reported responses in real bullying situations on victimized students' disclosure has not been examined to date.

The Current Study

In sum, the purpose of this study is to unravel teachers' role in facilitating victimized students' disclosure to their teacher. First, we aim to outline how many victimized students disclose to their teacher using an exploratory approach. Second, we aim to examine whether active or passive teacher interventions predict the likelihood of victimized students' disclosure to their teacher in a nationwide sample. Both aims are first investigated among all students who are victimized at one time point and subsequently among a subsample of these students who were also victimized at a previous time point (i.e., persistently victimized students). Based on conceptualizations of previous studies (e.g., Cortes & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2014) and in line with an attachment perspective (Verschueren & Koomen, 2012), we hypothesize that more active teacher responses (involving clear action, i.e., reprimand bullies,

contact parents, separate students) promote victimized students' feelings of safety, and thereby increase the likelihood to disclose. We expect that displaying passive teacher responses (involving little action, i.e., suggest avoidance, assertion or independent coping) signals an unsafe environment for disclosure, and subsequently predicts a decreased likelihood to disclose.

This study addresses several limitations of previous research. First, it adds to the scarce longitudinal research on teachers' role in victimization processes. Second, it measures actual disclosure by actual victimized students, whereas most studies so far assessed intentions to disclose in hypothetical situations (e.g., Cortes & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2014). It is also the first study investigating disclosure among persistently victimized students, as this group is most at-risk for negative long-term consequences (Arsenault, 2018). Moreover, using teacher and student reports grasps the complexity of victimization and disclosure from the angles of central informants. Lastly, this study meets a call for more culturally diverse studies on disclosure by Blomqvist et al. (2020) by investigating prevalence rates in Dutch primary schools.

Methods

Recruitment and Procedure

Data came from a longitudinal, nationwide investigation of the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs in The Netherlands (Orobio de Castro et al., 2018). Schools interested in implementing one of the programs were recruited. After the schools' consent to participate, this study conducted seven cluster randomized and quasi-experimental trials with two waves of data collected within one school year (T1 = September/October 2016, T2 = June/July 2017) among students (Grade 4–6) and their teachers. In each trial, schools chose universal anti-bullying programs and implemented them either after T1 (intervention condition) or after T2 (waiting list condition). We used a quasi-experimental design in which most participating

schools were randomly assigned to the intervention or waiting list condition, whereas some other schools chose the start date of program implementation themselves. A two-tailed independent samples *t*-test showed that students' victimization status at T2 did not differ significantly between the intervention condition (N= 2711, *M* = 1.66, *SD* = 1.16) and the waiting list condition (N= 2939, *M* = 1.62, *SD* = 1.15), $t(5648) = -1.343$, $p = .18$). Moreover, data inspection revealed no statistically significant effect of intervention status on victimized students' T2 disclosure, $\beta = -.095$, *SE* = .136, $R^2 = .001$, *OR* = .909, 95% CI [0.70, 1.19], $p = .484$. Therefore, we pooled together all students (i.e., both waiting list and intervention condition) in subsequent analyses. Nevertheless, intervention status was controlled for in our analyses when predicting disclosure.

Ethics approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the Radboud University in Nijmegen. Active informed consent was obtained from schools and teachers, and passive consent from parents/guardians. Parents/guardians of 71 students objected to participation. At both waves, students completed online self-report questionnaires with individual identification codes during regular school hours for approximately 45 min. Videos informed students about the study aims and set-up, and the definition of bullying. Confidentiality of students' responses was assured and students' answers were matched across time points using their identification codes. Teachers' self-report questionnaires were administered online at T1 and completion took roughly 10 min. Our hypotheses, sampling procedure and main analyses were preregistered at the Open Science Framework (https://bit.ly/2VylYgK). Based on the scope of this special issue, the paper focuses on teacher responses towards bullying. Obtaining prevalence information about disclosure was added as a descriptive research question.

Participants

Participants were drawn from the total sample of 5651 students who answered the questionnaire at T2, located in 277 classrooms in 70 primary schools. Participants were a subsample of students who indicated being victimized at least two or three times in the months prior to T2 (cf. Solberg & Olweus, 2003). The subsample comprised 874 students (46.3% girls; M_{age} = 10.23; SD_{age} = 1.13), located in 243 classrooms in 70 schools. Of these students, 445 were located in the waiting list and 429 in the intervention condition. Most students (93.5%) were born in The Netherlands. Three hundred and sixteen students (26.2%) indicated they were also victimized at least twice in the months preceding T1 (i.e., persistently victimized students). We also administered questionnaires to their teachers (N=238; 70.1% female; 18.8% male; 11.1% missing). In case two teachers were working part-time in the same class, we assessed the teacher who spent most hours in class with the students during the week. Namely, students have most opportunity to view this teacher's bullying responses and to tell them about their victimization.

Measures

Peer Victimization

Peer victimization was measured with a widely used item from the validated *Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire* (Solberg & Olweus, 2003), as we were interested in a broad range of victimization experiences. First, students watched a video explaining Olweus' (1994) definition of bullying, emphasizing the key features of intentionality, repetition and power imbalance. Next, students reported how often they were victimized at school in the past few months on a five-point scale (1 = *I have not been victimized in the past couple of months*, 5 = *Several times a week*).

Disclosure of Victimization to Teacher

Students who indicated being victimized were asked whether they told someone about

it. When they indicated they did, they could mention multiple people, i.e., (1) father/mother/caretaker, (2) brother/sister, (3) friend, (4) teacher, and/or (5) somebody else. Students who indicated that they disclosed to the teacher were labelled as *1*, those who did not as *0*.

Teacher Responses Towards Bullying

A Dutch translation and short version of the *Classroom Management Policies Questionnaire* (CMPQ; Troop-Gordon & Ladd, 2015) was used to measure teacher responses towards bullying. Teachers indicated how often they used the following strategies for managing bullying in their classroom: contact parents (e.g., '*I try to involve the parents of the bully in solving the problem*'), separate students (e.g., '*I send away the bully from the place where it happened*'), reprimand aggressors (e.g., '*I punish students when they bully others*'), suggest avoidance (e.g., '*I ask the victimized student to stay away from the bully*'), suggest assertion (e.g., *'I ask the victimized student to stand up more for him-/herself'*), and independent coping (e.g., '*I tell the victimized student to deal with it by him-/herself*'). Items ($n = 15$) were answered on a 5-point Likert scale ($0 = $ *never*, $4 = $ *always*). Whereas the original CMPQ included all questions twice (for boys and girls separately), our questions were not specified per gender because of high correlations between boy and girl subscales (rs $\geq .81$) in the original questionnaire.

The psychometric properties for the revised and shortened CMPQ were assessed using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) among the entire teacher sample that answered the questionnaire (N = 335). First, principal-axis factor analysis with Oblimin rotation was conducted as we expected the factors to correlate. Based on the scree plot, eigenvalues and theoretical considerations, a two-factor structure appeared optimal. Next, CFAs were conducted while non-normality was handled using the MLR estimator. Models with mono- and multiple factor structures were compared and model fit was evaluated using

the chi-square statistic, comparative fit index (CFI), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Kline, 2011). Following their cut-off scores (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Steiger, 2007), a two-factor model distinguishing between more active and more passive teacher interventions fit the data most adequately ($\chi 2(52) = 146.94$, $p < .001$, CFI $= 0.897$, RMSEA $= 0.079$, SRMR $= 0.059$).

Based on the modification indices, three items were removed due to low loading on the factors ($<.20$) and one item ('I place the victim and the bully away from each other in the classroom or on the playground') was moved from the active to the passive response factor. Specifically, placing victimized and bullying students away from each other does not involve actively addressing the bully or the class group and might therefore still make victimized students feel like they are on their own in dealing with bullying situations. The two final factors were reliable: the active response factor contained four ($\alpha = .66$) and the passive response factor eight items ($\alpha = .82$). Factor scores were created for active and passive teacher responses and used in subsequent analyses. Taking this approach, the relative weight of items was taken into account and noise that would have been created when using latent variables was removed.

Control Variables

First, we controlled for intervention status by labelling students in waiting list schools as *0* and students in intervention schools as *1*. We also included students' age and gender as control variables. Lastly, in analyses on the subgroup of persistently victimized students at both waves ($n = 316$), this study additional controlled for students' disclosure to their teacher at T1. Persistently victimized students are most at-risk for negative long-term consequences resulting from bullying (Arsenault, 2018) but, to our knowledge, no study investigating disclosure has controlled for previous disclosure yet.

Data Analysis

Analyses were conducted in R using the 'lme4' package for mixed effects modelling (Bates et al., 2015). In our regression models, T2 disclosure to the teacher was the binary outcome variable and a random intercept for classroom was included to account for the nested nature of our data. The bobyqa (Bound Optimization by Quadratic Approximation) optimizer was specified to achieve model convergence. Since 18 students (2% of the sample) were missing teacher ratings and one student did not respond to the T2 disclosure item, they were removed from the analyses.

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Results

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Descriptives

Table 1 presents bivariate correlations among study variables. In the total sample of T2 victimized students, a significant, positive and small correlation between age and disclosure ($r = .11$) was found (Cohen, 1988). Hence, older students disclosed to teachers more often. Moreover, a significant, positive correlation was found between active and passive teacher responses ($r = .38$). This moderate association demonstrates that teachers who reported to display more active responses, also reported displaying more passive responses towards bullying. Overall, teachers used slightly more active ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.64$) than passive response strategies ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.62$). In addition, a significant, positive and small correlation between passive teacher responses and study condition was found ($r = 0.27$). Thus, teachers reported more passive responses when being located in the intervention condition as compared to the control condition. No significant correlations were found between teacher responses and T2 disclosure. In the subsample of persistently victimized students, a significant, positive and small correlation between T1 and T2 disclosure ($r = .20$) was found. Disclosing to the teacher at T1 was related to telling them again at T2. Hence,

disclosing to the teacher remained relatively stable across the school year. Lastly, gender correlated significantly and positively with T1 disclosure ($r = .12$). This small association indicates that persistently victimized boys disclosed to teachers at T1 more often than girls.

In order to know how many students disclose their victimization to their teacher (Aim 1), we first looked at disclosure in general at T2. Of the 874 victimized students, 671 (76.8%) told at least one person about their victimization. Next, we investigated to whom these students disclosed. Table 2 shows that students who disclosed told their father, mother, or caregivers most often (80.6%). Subsequently, students disclosed to a friend (59.8%) and the teacher (58.3%). Next, 27.3% of students disclosed to a sibling and telling someone else was least common (20.7%). A similar order of disclosure rates to significant others was found at T1 among persistently victimized students. Importantly, 50.9% of these students did not disclose to their teacher at all, 6.3% at T1 only, 8.9% at T2 only and 33.9% of the persistently victimized students told their teacher at both time points.

Likelihood to Disclose

To assess the effect of teacher responses on victimized students' disclosure (Aim 2), we first examined whether T1 teacher responses predicted the likelihood of T2 disclosure to the teacher. After checking assumptions and model diagnostics, analyses were executed among all students victimized at T2 ($n = 855$; complete cases) while controlling for gender, age and study condition. Table 3 displays that being older slightly increased the likelihood for victimized students to disclose to their teacher at T2 ($OR = 1.23$, 95% CI [1.08, 1.40]). Teacher responses did not significantly predict disclosure ($OR_{active} = 0.84$, 95% CI [0.57, 1.24], $OR_{passive} = 1.33$, 95% CI [0.91, 1.96]). The model explained 6.5% of the variance in the likelihood of T2 disclosure to the teacher.

Next, we examined whether teacher responses predicted the likelihood of T2 disclosure among the subsample of persistently victimized students ($n = 316$), additionally

controlling for T1 disclosure. Table 3 shows similar patterns as the previous model in terms of statistical significance of age (OR = 1.41, 95% CI [1.14, 1.78]) and teacher responses (OR_{active} = 0.62, 95% CI [0.33, 1.17], $OR_{passive}$ = 1.57, 95% CI [0.82, 3.03]). Moreover, T1 disclosure was predictive of the likelihood of T2 disclosure (OR = 2.26, 95% CI [1.40, 3.74]). When victimized students told their teacher at T1, they were more than twice as likely to disclose at T2 as well. This model explained 12.1% of the variance in T2 disclosure to the teacher.[1]

Discussion

Although teachers are key adults in tackling bullying, the question to what extent their responses towards bullying might facilitate victims' disclosure was largely unexplored. Knowing about bullying is the first step for teachers to intervene and offer support. Therefore, this study investigated (1) the prevalence of disclosure to teachers, and (2) whether teacher responses towards bullying predict victimized students' later disclosure to the teacher in a large sample of victimized early adolescents.

Prevalence

Results indicated that 76.8% of victimized students told someone, which is equal to or higher than rates reported in previous studies (e.g., Blomqvist et al., 2020). This may be related to a growing consciousness of negative consequences and disapproval of bullying in our society. Nonetheless, one in four victimized students still remains silent. Although disclosure might worsen the situation for some students (e.g., Shaw et al., 2019), at least the attention of the environment is directed at the bullying. When staying silent, victimized students suffer without even the possibility for others to intervene and offer essential support.

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[1] As a robustness check, we conducted additional analyses using only students in the waiting list condition. This yielded mainly similar results. Therefore, results from the larger and more representative sample combining both study conditions are reported.

The finding that 58.3% of T2 disclosers told their teacher indicates that a majority views the teacher as a safe haven for help and comfort when experiencing distress. However, four in ten disclosers do not, which shows that teachers cannot solely rely on information received from victimized students for tackling bullying. Active monitoring (e.g., targeted observations, inquiries about classroom peer relationships) remains an important additional step for teachers to identify victimized students. Based on our findings, teachers are urged to be more open to signs of bullying in their classroom and on the playground and clarify to students under which circumstances someone is considered a "tattletale".

Teacher Responses

Persistently victimized students' tendency to disclose was relatively stable over the school year, irrespective of what teachers said they do. The finding that more active teacher responses did not predict victimized students' likelihood to disclose could be explained by the nature of the items in the scale, which all reflected actions directed at the bullying students. Previous studies demonstrate that punishing bullies can be associated with less likelihood to report to a teacher (Cortes & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2014), for instance out of fear of retaliation (Bauman et al., 2016). More passive teacher responses were not predictive of disclosure either. Although these responses are directed at victimized students (e.g. by asking them to avoid bullies), they might still have missed an essential element of emotional support. Importantly, 'feeling listened to' was the adult response most often perceived by victimized students to improve their situation (Bauman et al., 2016). Therefore, future studies are encouraged to focus on the development of a valid and reliable teacher measure of a range of their recalled responses to actual bullying events. A more nuanced teacher report with components such as victim support (e.g.,Wachs et al., 2019) might be more relevant to relate to disclosure than the instrument we opted for in our study.

In sum, our study found no effects of teacher responses on victimized students' disclosure to teachers. With regard to explanations at the teacher level, teachers' indicated responses towards victimized students *in general* were assessed. Perhaps teachers did not apply the reported strategies towards the victimized students in our sample, but to others. Hence, the victimized students in our sample may not have experienced these signals of (un)safe environments. Asking victimized students about their perception of teachers' responses would help solve this issue. Alternatively, there might be important third variables that were not assessed in our study, such as teacher availability, ability to assist, and confidentiality (Yablon, 2017). Investigating the interplay between teacher responses and other factors when predicting disclosure is recommended. Lastly, as inadequate teacher responses might signal to victimized students that disclosure will not be helpful, more research into predictors of teacher responses towards bullying is warranted. Whereas teachers cannot intervene if they are ignorant of students being victimized (Oldenburg et al., 2016), some teachers may believe that bullying is part of growing up, lack the confidence to intervene or put little effort in reducing bullying (Veenstra et al., 2014). Countering teacher misperceptions and training them about appropriate response strategies is crucial.

Interestingly, the positive relationship between teachers' active and passive response strategies highlights the complexity of responding to bullying. Apparently, some teachers respond to bullying in multiple ways (i.e., both active and passive) whereas others mostly use one strategy or do not respond at all. Different bullying situations might require different and sometimes combined teacher responses (e.g., Burger et al., 2015). For example, research has shown that teachers were more likely to discipline bullies in physical as compared to verbal or relational victimization situations (Yoon et al., 2016). Future studies should be undertaken to investigate which response styles are more likely to occur in which situations. Research

questions that could be asked include whether teachers using combined responses elicit more disclosure than those using mostly one type of response.

To develop a full picture of teachers' responses and disclosure, specific focus could be directed towards measuring teacher responses *after* disclosure as compared to other ways of discovering bullying (e.g., by witnessing it). Teacher responses following disclosure might require a delicate approach, for instance by ensuring confidentiality and offering emotional support. It is pivotal for teachers to prevent victimized students' disclosure from backfiring as 'snitching' and making the situation worse. A recent study by Shaw et al. (2019), for example, examined victimization and internalizing problems one year after disclosure and found that telling a teacher can be detrimental for some victimized students.'

Alternatively, our null findings regarding teacher responses could be due to factors at the student level. Whether students disclose being victimized or not may be a fairly stable decision that could be less affected by teachers than we expected. Differently put, even if teachers respond properly, other obstacles may withhold victimized students from disclosing. On an individual level, these obstacles could include shame, denial and anxiety to get the 'victim' label (Bjereld, 2018). Distrust of adult intervention, fear of retaliation by bullies, and classroom pro-bullying norms are only a few potential obstacles on an environmental level (e.g., Bjereld, 2018). This would also make sense from a participant role perspective (Salmivalli et al., 1996), emphasizing the role of classmates in bullying dynamics. This explanation also suggests a potential gap between students' intentions to disclose and the complex trade-off of costs and benefits connected to *actual* disclosure.

Regarding our control variables, persistently victimized students who told their teacher about bullying before were more likely to disclose later on than those who did not disclose previously. On the one hand this may indicate that victimized students with positive sharing experiences might feel confident to continue disclosing to their teacher (Bjereld, 2018).

However, these students were still being victimized *despite* telling their teacher before. They may disclose again as a cry for help because their situation remained unchanged. Those who were victimized at T1 but remained silent towards their teacher, might be a group of downhearted students who believe telling a teacher will not improve their situation. More studies into disclosure trajectories of persistently victimized students are encouraged. Moreover, older students were more likely to disclose to teachers. This is in contrast with previous studies (e.g., Bauman et al., 2016), but may be due to older students' increased understanding of negative consequences of remaining silent.

Strengths and Limitations

This nationwide study investigated the influence of teacher responses towards bullying on victimized students' actual disclosure to their teacher, using multiple informants. It followed a large sample of victimized students throughout one school year and its longitudinal design allowed us to investigate the temporal sequence of variables. By measuring actual disclosure among victimized students, we also captured this construct in the most ecologically valid way. Moreover, this study improved our understanding of disclosure by persistently victimized students and provided disclosure prevalence rates among victimized early adolescents in The Netherlands.

This study also has some limitations. First, teacher responses towards bullying were measured with teacher reports. Although teachers know best which strategies they apply, it is uncertain whether teacher perceptions transfer to similar student perceptions. Moreover, a limited and non-exhaustive amount of response strategies was assessed. Other strategies (e.g. with a victim support component) could be relevant to relate to victimized students' disclosure too. Besides, teachers' responses towards bullying in general were measured whereas teachers may respond differently to different forms of bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Different forms of bulling have also been linked to different coping mechanisms of

victimized students (Aceves et al., 2010). In addition, teachers might have responded to the items in a socially desirable way. Lastly, the small positive correlation between study condition and passive teacher responses may be indicative of a selection bias for study condition. For instance, schools who chose to be in the intervention condition may have had less knowledge of how to effectively tackle bullying and a higher need for fast intervention. Therefore, future studies with completely random designs are encouraged.

In conclusion, this study contributed to the literature on teachers' role in victimization processes. It shed light on victimized' students disclosure to their teacher and whether teacher responses towards bullying predict disclosure. First, we found that one in four victimized students still remains silent to everyone. Almost 60% of disclosing students told their teacher, underscoring teachers' position as confidant but also showing the need for teachers to stay alert themselves. The way in which teachers indicated to respond to bulling did not predict the likelihood for victimized students' disclosure later in the school year. These results stress a need for more studies on victimized students' disclosure using different conceptualizations of teacher responses, targeting persistently victimized students and assessing additional variables that might foster disclosure. Besides teaching teachers how to create a safe environment for victimized students to disclose, teacher trainings and anti-bullying interventions are urged to support teachers how to respond appropriately after students speak up.

Acknowledgments

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Tables

Table 1

Correlations Between Study Variables (n=874)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. T2 disclosure to teacher	-						
2. Active teacher responses	-0.02	-					
3. Passive teacher responses	0.04	0.38[a]***	-				
4. Study condition	-0.02	0.08[a]	0.27[a]***	-			
5. Age	0.11**	-0.06	-0.01	-0.02	-		
6. Gender	-0.02	0.04	-0.01	-0.02	-0.03	-	
7. T1 disclosure to teacher[b]	0.20***	-0.01	-0.07	0.06	0.07	0.12*	-

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. *** = $p < .001$; [a] $n = 234$; [b] $n = 316$ (persistently victimized students)

Table 2

Frequencies of Disclosure of Victimization at T1 and T2

	T1 disclosers ($n = 216$)		T2 disclosers ($n = 671$)	
	n	%	*n*	%
To father/mother/caretaker	162	75.0	541	80.6
To friend	134	62.0	401	59.8
To teacher	127	58.8	391	58.3
To brother/sister	69	31.9	183	27.3
To someone else	58	26.9	139	20.7

Note. $n_{\text{T1 victimized students}} = 316$, $n_{\text{T2 victimized students}} = 874$.

Table 3

Multilevel Binary Logistic Regression Parameter Estimates of Disclosure to Teacher

Independent variables	All T2 victimized students (*n*=855)		Persistently victimized students (*n*=316)	
	B (SE)	Odds Ratio (95% CI)	*B (SE)*	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Active teacher responses	-0.17 (0.20)	0.84 [0.57, 1.24]	-0.47 (0.31)	0.62 [0.33, 1.17]
Passive teacher responses	0.29 (0.19)	1.33 [0.91, 1.96]	0.45 (0.33)	1.57 [0.82, 3.03]
Study condition (0 = control)	-0.13 (0.16)	0.88 [0.64, 1.20]	-0.03 (0.25)	0.97 [0.59, 1.61]
Age	0.21* (0.07)	1.23 [1.08, 1.40]	0.34* (0.11)	1.41 [1.14, 1.78]
Gender (0 = girl)	-0.04 (0.15)	0.96 [0.73, 1.28]	0.11 (0.25)	1.11 [0.69, 1.82]
T1 disclosure	-	-	0.82* (0.25)	2.26 [1.40, 3.74]

Note. CI = confidence interval; *= *p* <.001