Public Abstract

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Title:GIRLSS: A study of the effectiveness of a mulit-modal intervention to reduce relational aggression

Relational aggression has quickly become a serious issue in schools with heart wrenching stories of victimization appearing daily in the news. To prevent such harmful behaviors, effective interventions must be developed. In this research, one such intervention was evaluated by comparing changes in the relationally aggressive behavior of participants from pretest to posttest, to changes in the behaviors of comparison peers. The study was a pilot project of the intervention GIRLSS (Growing Interpersonal Relationships through Learning and Systemic Supports), which includes a school-based group counseling component and consultation with parents through phone calls and brief training workshops. The study found that school counselors reported significantly greater decreases in the relationally aggressive behaviors of GIRLSS participants from pretest to posttest than changes observed in comparison peers who were not part of the intervention. Participation in the intervention group also significantly predicted increased knowledge of relational aggression and the GIRLSS curriculum. However, no significant effects were found through the report of teachers regarding the relationally aggressive behaviors of study participants. Overall, the findings of the study suggest that GIRLSS is potentially effective in reducing relational aggression. While further revisions and evaluation are necessary, the study is a first step in providing schools an effective method of addressing a very concerning and increasingly prevalent problem.