

Bullying and Hazardous Driving Among Youthful Drivers

Dear Editor:

Bullying in schools is an important social, psychological and educational problem. Research on this behaviour is available from diverse countries.¹⁻⁵ Reported rates of students being bullied range from 10% to 50%.^{1,3,4,6} A recent Ontario study found that 20.7% of students engaged in bullying.¹

Bullying behaviour is a marker for antisocial development.⁷ Perpetrators engage in antisocial behaviour later in life,⁸ and have higher levels of criminal thinking, aggression and psychopathology.^{3,9} More research is needed on how bullying relates to aggressive behaviours outside of school situations.

Hazardous driving, including driving after drinking and drug use, and street racing, are aggressive in nature. Several characteristics of bullies are shared with hazardous drivers, e.g., being male, consuming alcohol, and engaging in other antisocial behaviours. However, no studies show how bullying relates to hazardous driving. Here, we report associations between self-reported bullying perpetration and hazardous driving in a large, representative sample of students in Canadian schools.

We employed data from the 2011 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) conducted by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (sampling design details can be found in reference 1). A subpopulation of students aged 16 or older who had a driver's licence was selected for analyses (n=1,312). Self-reported bullying was assessed with this question: "Since September, in what way did you bully other students the most at school?" (recoded 0=no, did not bully; 1=yes, bullied). Measures of hazardous driving covered how often in the previous 12 months students reported: drinking and driving ("...have you driven a vehicle within an hour of drinking 2 or more drinks of alcohol?"), cannabis use and driving ("...have you driven a vehicle within an hour of using marijuana or hashish?"), street racing ("...have you driven a car, truck or SUV in a street race?") and collision involvement ("...were you in a car accident involving any kind of injury to you or to another person, or damage to the vehicle, while you were driving?") (recoded 0=no; 1=yes). Socio-demographic variables included were: sex, age, and type of driver's licence (Ontario G1 licence, G2/full licence). Univariate and multivariate analyses were conducted using STATA software.

The prevalence of self-reported bullying perpetration among adolescents was 21.3%. Bullies were significantly more likely to be younger adolescents, aged 16 or 17 years (p<0.05). Bullying behaviour was significantly (p<0.01) more common among those report-

ing drinking and driving (47.0%) than among those who did not drink and drive (19.5%). Other hazardous driving measures did not differ by self-reported bullying behaviour. Logistic regression analysis revealed that adolescents who reported drinking and driving had 3.69 (95% CI: 1.34-10.21, p<0.05) greater odds of self-reported bullying behaviour compared to non-drinking drivers, controlling for other hazardous driving and socio-demographic measures.

These results suggest a strong relationship between drinking and driving and bullying perpetration among adolescents in Ontario. However, other hazardous driving behaviours did not show an association with self-reported bullying. Further research should examine a variety of delinquent and criminal activities among bullies, especially those involving alcohol consumption.

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