

**The Relationship Between  
Self-Efficacy,  
Empathy and  
Personal Responsibility  
On Bullying Participant Roles**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between self-efficacy, empathy and personal responsibility on bullying participant roles which include the role of the bully, victim, defender and the passive bystander. Participants were 172 secondary school students from Dublin ranging in age from 12-21. The participants answered a questionnaire consisting of a self-reported participant role scale (Pozzoli, Gini & Vieno, 2012), revised pro-victim scale (Rigby & Slee, 1991), self-efficacy regarding peer intervention scale (Kingston, 2008) and personal responsibility scale. (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010). Results showed that high scores on self-efficacy and personal responsibility were associated with the defender role. Low scores on self-efficacy and personal responsibility were correlated with the role of the bully and low scores on empathy were associated with the passive bystander. It was found that more females participated as a defender and more males participated in the bully and passive bystander roles. Younger children were associated with the role of the defender.

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between self-efficacy, empathy and personal responsibility on bullying participant roles which include the role of the bully, the victim, the defender and the passive bystander. The main objective of gathering this information is to gain a better understanding of why people do or do not get involved in bullying and in doing so help put a stop to bullying altogether. If we can understand the effect of these three variables together in bullying situations then researchers might be able to develop successful, comprehensive prevention programs and support systems for bullying in schools.

### **1.2 Prevalence of Bullying**

Bullying is a social phenomenon that is a major problem in today's society, affecting most if not all schools. A nationwide Irish study conducted by O' Moore in (1997) as cited in Flood, (2013) found that approximately 31% of primary school children and 16% of secondary school students have been victims of bullying at some stage in their school life. This amounts to approximately 200,000 students. A 2004-2005 study that was conducted by Trinity College Dublin found that 35.3% of primary school children and 36.4% of secondary school children were involved in the bully/victim cycle. 13.5% of those secondary school children admitted to being the bully. (Minton, 2010). The Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC), National Children's Consultation Survey, (2011) which involved 18,000 young people found that 26% of secondary school students said that they were bullied or knew someone that had been bullied and 22% of primary school children said that they were bullied or knew someone that had been bullied. (ISPCC, 2011).

### **1.3 Definitions of Bullying**

There are many different definitions of bullying. Bullying is repeated, systematic attacks intended to harm those who are unable or unlikely to defend themselves. (Berger, 2011). It is a form of aggressive behaviour that is characterised by deliberate, repeated and harmful abuse of power (Tsang, Hui & Law, 2011) and is an unprovoked, intentional and repetitive act which displays an imbalance of power that aims to cause physical or psychological harm. (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012). The three components of bullying consist of deliberate hostility and aggression, a victim who is less powerful than the bully and results in a painful and distressing outcome. (Meggit, 2012). One important aspect of all of these definitions is that bullying is a repeated act and is directed towards someone weaker than the perpetrator that is unable to defend themselves. Any child can be involved in aggressive behaviour but if it involves two students of equal strength and is not repeated it does not constitute as bullying. (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). The bully refers to the person who is inflicting the unwanted, violent behaviour over others. They are active, initiative-taking perpetrators. The victim is the person who is directly exposed to these unwanted, violent behaviour. They are systematically and repeatedly harassed. (Salmivalli, 1999; Ozkan & Cifci, 2009).

### **1.4 Types of Bullying**

Bullying can be divided into two categories direct and indirect. (Olweus, 1993; O'Moore, 2010; Rigby, 2008). Direct bullying can be described as overt behaviours such as open attacks and physical aggression while indirect bullying can be characterised by covert behaviours where aggression is more subtle such as writing notes or graffiti about a person. (O'Moore, 2010).

Verbal bullying is indirect and is characterised by a negative action such as name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours or threats. (Olweus, 1993; Flood, 2013; Meggit, 2012; Berger, 2011; Tsang et al, 2011). A nationwide survey by the Irish National Teachers Organisation that was conducted in four hundred and fifty two schools, which included males, females and mixed schools, found that name calling was the most common form of bullying/ (Smith, Moirta, Junger-Tas, Olweus, Catalona & Slee, 1999). Physical bullying is a form of direct bullying and is characterised by negative action that results in physical harm such as pushing, shoving or kicking. (Olweus, 1993; Flood, 2013; Meggit, 2012; Berger, 2011; Tsang et al, 2011). Relational bullying is indirect and is characterised by socially manipulative forms of aggression which aim to hurt the other person emotionally and to destroy peer acceptance. Tactics used can include spreading rumours, ignoring the victim's presence, threatening others not to hang around with the victim or directing intimidating or threatening stares towards the victim. (Dodaj, Sesar, Barisic & Pandza, 2013; Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012). Cyber bullying is carried out by using electronic technology such as computers, phones and social networking sites and is a form of indirect bullying. (Rigby, 2008). Electronic devices can be used to send abusive and destructive verbal and visual messages. (O'Moore, 2010).

Bullies are described as anxious, academically uneducated, and insecure who tend to be aggressive and coercive. They display negative attitudes towards their peers and tend to solve their problems with violence. (Dodaj et al, 2013; Ozkan & Cifci, 2009). Bullies were traditionally thought to be unpopular with low self-esteem and low social skills, however this is not the case especially when it comes to girls. (Ozkan & Cifci, 2009). Girls who use relational bullying display high self-concept and social cognition which is essential for the coercive social manipulation that they engage in. (Ozkan & Cifci, 2009). Victims usually suffer from low self-esteem, anxiety and depression (Dodaj et al, 2013) and are described as

cautious, sensitive, quiet and lonely and someone who does not have a single good friend in school. (Berger, 2011).

### **1.5 Psychological Impact of Bullying**

Bullying can lead to negative outcomes for both the bully and the victim. Children who participate in bullying are at risk of lacking compassion and concern for others by becoming desensitized to bullying which becomes part of their normal daily life. (Tsang et al, 2011). They are at an increased risk of dropping out of school and failing academically which can lead to them becoming involved in gangs and participating in delinquent and anti-social behaviour. (Tsang et al, 2011). In later life they might have difficulty sustaining healthy, intimate relationship and can become abusive spouses and parents. (Tsang et al, 2011). This can lead to them being at a higher risk of depression and suicide. (Tsang et al, 2011). Males that participate in bullying behaviour are more likely to be diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and oppositional deficit or conduct disorder. (Kaukiainen, Bjoqikqvist, Lagerspetz, O'Sterman, Salmivalli, Rothberg & Ahlborn, 1999).

Victims of bullying are at an increased risk to develop depression, to suffer from anxiety, engage in self-harm and to complain of psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches and dizziness. (Barhight, Hubbard & Hyde, 2013). They suffer academically with poorer grades and higher absenteeism rates (Barhight et al, 2013) and are more likely to develop problems such as sleeping disorders and a decrease in problem solving abilities. (Ozkan & Cifci, 2009). They are also at an increased risk of suicide. (Barhight et al, 2013) This has been seen in Ireland over recent years with a number of high profiled cases such as Erin Gallagher, Ciara Pugsley and Phoebe Prince all being connected to bullying. Barhight et al,

(2013) found that 71% of children who perpetrated school shootings were victims of bullying. Victims of bullying are at increased risk to develop trait anxiety, social anxiety and relationship dysfunction in later life. (Tsang et al, 2011).

Due to the increase of bullying and the high rates of suicides that are suspected to be associated with bullying (Barhight et al, 2013), The Department of Education published an “Anti-Bullying Procedure for Primary and Post-Primary Schools” in September 2013, which provided schools with new guidelines on how to deal with bullying situations. Under these new guidelines all schools must have a written anti-bullying policy as part of their code of behaviours. Schools must provide a positive school culture and climate which encourages students to tell about bullying and have a school wide approach to bullying which should share an understanding of what bullying is and its impact. It is essential that schools promote bullying as an unacceptable behaviour amongst all members including the school management, teachers, pupils and parents. Schools are instructed to provide effective supervision and monitoring of all pupils and adequate support for staff. They should develop a program of support for those affected by or involved in bullying and constantly monitor, investigate and follow up all bullying behaviours. This anti bullying policy should be published on the school website, provided to the parent association and be easily accessible to staff and students. (Department of Education and Skills, 2013).

Since the implementation of these new guidelines in schools and the severe psychological effects associated with bullying it is imperative that research examines bullying behaviours in schools.

### **1.6 Participant Roles of Bullying**

School bullying can be seen as a triadic social process which involves not only the bully and the victim but also the bystanders present. (Tsong et al, 2011). In most bullying

episodes there are a number of classmates present and even those who are not present are aware of it. These bystanders assume roles that are equal if not more important than that of the bully and the victim in the bullying process which can influence the beginning of the bullying and its continuation. (Tsung et al, 2011). This is why it is essential that research is done on the behaviours of bystanders and not only the bully and the victim.

There has been a lot of research done on the different roles that bystanders can engage in. The Olweus bullying prevention program identified how bystanders can either be a follower, a defender or a disengaged onlooker. (Barhight et al, 2013). The follower joins in with the bullying, the defender actively supports the victim and the disengaged onlooker is not affected by the bullying taking place before them. (Barhight et al, 2013).

Salmivalli (1999) participant role approach proposes that students can take up four different bystander roles which consist of the role of the assistant to the bully, the reinforcer to the bully, the defender of the victim and the passive bystander. The assistant to the bully are those students who join the bully and begin to bully the victim. The reinforcer of the bully provides positive feedback to the bully by laughing and cheering or by providing an audience for the bully. The defender of the victim, takes sides with the victim, they comfort and defend the victim, seek support and advice from other adults or teachers and they try to stop the other children bullying the victim. The passive bystander withdraws from the bullying situation, denying that anything is happening or remains as a silent audience. (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010; Salmivalli, Voeten & Poskiparta, 2011; Thornberg & Jungert, 2013; Salmivalli, 1999).

Defender behaviour is associated with empathy, anti-bullying attitudes, pro-victim attitudes, and a sense of social justice, low moral disengagement and high personal responsibility. (Thornberg & Jungert, 2013). It is also associated with friendship with the

victim, perceived peer pressure to help, social and defender self-efficacy and a sense of social justice. (Thornberg & Jungert, 2013).

In a Finnish study 20%-30% of pre-adolescents and adolescents took up the role as an assistant and reinforcer to the bully. Another 20%-30% of students acted as a passive outsider and 20% of students participated as a defender to the victim. (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). In another study the majority of sixth grade students were classified as either a passive bystander or reinforcers to the bully as opposed to defenders of the victims. (Poyhonen, Juvonen & Salmivalli, 2010).

Understanding the roles of bystanders are important as they outnumber both the bullies and victims in a school and research has shown that they can play an important role in the reduction of bullying. This could be essential when trying to implement intervention plans as the behaviour of the bystanders might be easier to change than that of the aggressive bully. (Salmivalli et al, 2011). If researchers can change the bystander's behaviour in a positive way this can then in turn change the bully's behaviour. It has been shown when bystanders actively expressed their disapproval of bullying, bullying rates decreased by 50%. (Pepler & Craig, 1995). Bullying is more frequent in schools where students assume the role of the reinforcer and less frequent in schools where students assume the role of the defender. (Thornberg & Jungert, 2013).

Another important reason for researchers to understand the roles of the bystander is because just like the bully and the victim, bullying episodes can also have negative impacts on the bystanders involved. (Tsung et al, 2011). Bystanders who witness bullying state that they feel helpless, uneasy and distressed. They often feel guilty for not intervening and are angry at themselves and the bully. They can also be fearful of becoming a victim themselves. This can distract them from their school work as they are too focused on avoiding the bully

which can lead to academic failure. (Tsung et al, 2011). These feelings can also affect the bystanders in later life and cause them to develop an inability to solve problems, they could have distorted views of personal responsibility and they could become desensitized towards anti-social behaviours. (Tsung et al, 2011). Therefore, participant roles will be examined in the current research to establish what roles as bystander's people take when they witness bullying.

### **1.7 Gender, Age and the Participant Roles of Bullying**

Boys are more actively involved in the bullying process and are more likely to acquire the participant roles of the reinforcers and the assistants in bullying situations. (Salmivalli, 2010; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). Girls however are more likely to participate in the roles of the defender and the passive bystanders in bullying situations. (Salmivalli, 2010; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). Girls are nominated as defenders more often than boys both by their classmates and victims. (Salmivalli, 2010). In today's society boys are brought up to be aggressive and involved in tough and tumble play. When in a social group they are expected by their peers to get involved to some degree in mutual teasing and bullying behaviour. (Salmivalli, Lagerspratz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman & Kukiainen, 1996). In contrast girls are brought up to be sensitive and caring and to behave in more pro-social and helping ways. (Salmivalli et al, 1996). It could be interpreted that gender roles in society can be correlated with the participant roles bystanders choose to take up.

Older children are less likely to intervene on behalf of the victim of bullying and more likely to remain a passive bystander while younger children and girls are more likely to intervene in bullying situations than boys and other children. (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010; Barhight et al, 2013; Salmivalli, 2010). Defending behaviour seems to decrease with age with early secondary school children less likely to sympathise with victims of bullying and to intervene

on their behalf. (Hutchinson, 2012). Salmivalli, Lappalainen & Lagerspetz (1998) also found this to be the case but only in girls. Salmivalli & Voeten (2004) stated that for boys all participant roles such as bullying others, assisting the bully, reinforcing the bully and withdrawing in sixth grade strongly predicted their behaviour in eighth grade. Unlike boys, how a sixth grade girl behaved in bullying behaviour did not predict her behaviour in eighth grade. This was more likely to be predicted by her social context and social influences such as her peer group. (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). A reason for this has been put forward by Latene and Darcey (1970), they state that only children below the age of nine are not affected by the social inhibition against helping. This study will be examining the effect gender and age have on the participant roles people acquire in bullying situations.

### **1.8 Self- Efficacy and the Participant Roles of Bullying**

Self-efficacy can be defined as a person's belief in their capabilities to organise and execute a plan of action to obtain certain goals or activities. (Tsung et al, 2011). It is a person's "belief in their capabilities to successfully organise and execute a particular action required to produce the desired result". (Thornberg & Jungert, 2013, p. 477). Self-efficacy refers to a person's belief in their competencies in certain situations. (Kim, Lee & Kim, 2013). Self- efficacy can be seen to play a critical role in whether students get involved in bystanding behaviours or remain passive. (Tsung et al, 2011; Thornberg & Jungert, 2013; Poyhonen et al, 2010). Helping a peer who is getting victimized in a bullying situation can be an extremely risky task, as the person who becomes involved on behalf of the victim is facing a hostile bully and is at risk of becoming a victim themselves. (Tsung et al, 2011; Thornberg & Jungert, 2013; Poyhonen et al, 2012). Therefore the individual would need to be confident in their ability to intervene effectively, if they did not believe that had the ability to intervene in the bullying situation effectively, they are far less likely to do so even if they are in

disagreement of the bullying behaviour. (Tsung et al, 2011; Thornberg & Jungert, 2013; Poyhonen et al, 2012). A person's self-efficacy in certain domains in their life can affect how they behave in bullying situations. (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012)/ People with high self-efficacy in academic performances and social interaction are more likely to deal with problems in a preserving and anxiety free manor. (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012). It might be suggested that these people would obtain the role of the defender in bullying situations. People with low self-efficacy in these domains are more likely to develop maladaptive behaviour and might be more likely to take up the role of the bully, assistant to the bully or the victim. (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012).

Research on self-efficacy and the participant roles of bullying suggest that self-efficacy positively affects pro-social behaviour with students high in self-efficiency beliefs more likely to try and help the victim whereas those with low levels of self-efficacy beliefs are far more likely to not intervene at all. (Tsung et al, 2011). Thornberg & Jungert, (2013) stated that in their study high levels of self-efficacy motivated and engaged adolescents to help the victim, while low levels of self-efficacy inhibited them from intervening. Gini, Albiero, Benelli,& Altoe, (2007) also found this to be the case as in their study, defending behaviour was associated with high levels of self-efficacy and passive bystander behaviour was associated with low levels of self-efficacy. They found that self-efficacy was the key factor that differentiated whether a person would intervene on behalf of the victim or remain passive. Gini, Albiero, Benelli and Altoe (2008) in their study were also consistent with this belief as they found that self-efficacy was positively associated with defender behaviour and negatively associated with passive bystander behaviour. Despite all these studies that suggest that self-efficacy was positively associated with defending the victim, a study on Greek fourth to sixth grade students which was undertaken by Andreeou and Metallidou, (2004) found that self-efficacy was not associated with standing up for the victim. Poyhonen et al,

(2010) have suggested that reasons for these conflicting results is that all these studies use a general measure of self-efficacy. To measure self-efficacy accurately the scale should apply it to the context been examined for example bullying. To deal with this issue this research will apply the self-efficacy beliefs regarding peer intervention scale to try and accurately measure self-efficacy in bullying situations as used in a previous study by Kingston, (2008).

In a study by Cappadocia, Pepler, Cummings & Craig (2012) they found that self-efficacy predicted bystander intervention among girls but not among boys. Thornberg & Jungert, (2013) found that self-efficacy was positively associated with defender behaviour and negatively associated with passive bystander behaviours amongst both boys and girls. To build upon this research this study will examine self-efficacy in the context of bullying behaviours and the roles involved.

### **1.9 Empathy and the Participant Roles of Bullying**

Empathy can be defined as the extent to which one person understands and can experience someone else's emotions. (Barhight et al, 2013; Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012). "Empathy is the process of putting oneself in the place of another person, seeing events from that person's point of view and understanding the feelings and ideas of that person correctly". (Ozkan, & Cifci, 2009, p, 33). Empathy facilitates pro-social behaviours and helps to prevent maladaptive behaviour. (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012). There are two different types of empathy, these consist of cognitive and affective empathy. Cognitive empathy refers to a person's ability to understand someone else's emotions. It is being able to put yourself in their shoes, imagine what their thinking and how it is affecting them. Affective empathy refers to being actively able to experience someone else's emotions. It is being able to align your feelings with theirs. (Barhight et al, 2013; Dodaj et al, 2013).

Gini et al, (2007) found that low levels of empathetic responsiveness was associated with boy's involvement in bullying but not girls. Jolliffe & Farrington, (2004) found that there was a negative association between empathy and bullying behaviours. They stated that this association was stronger for younger children than older children. Despite this Sutton, Smith & Swettenham (1999) found a positive relationship between empathy and bullying behaviours. They stated that this suggests that some bullies have good theory of mind skills and are able to understand other people's mental states and use them against them. Gini et al, (2008) found that defending behaviour and passive bystander behaviour were both associated with low levels of empathy. They argued that empathy is not a sufficient predictor of pro-social behaviour and that other factors need to be taken into account such as self-efficacy beliefs and personal responsibility that this study aims to examine. Caravita, Blasio & Salmivalli, (2008) stated that out of all the participant roles of bullying empathy was highly associated with defender behaviours. Malti, Perren & Buchmann, (2010) found a negative correlation between empathy and victimisation as did Kokkinos & Kipritsi, (2012) who propose that the reason for this could be because victims may be unable to recognise, understand and regulate their emotions which may lead to peer rejection. To build on this research this study will explore the relationship between empathy and the difference roles bystanders assume in the bullying process.

### **1.10 Personal Responsibility and the Participant Roles of Bullying**

In bullying situations even if bystanders perceive that bullying the victim is wrong and hold high levels of empathy and self-efficacy that may still remain passive. Pozzoli & Gini, (2010) suggested that for a bystander to intervene on behalf of a victim that must hold some moral assumption of personal responsibility. Personal responsibility refers to a bystander's sense of responsibility to intervene on behalf of the victim. (Pozzoli & Gini,

2010). As far as we know Pozzoli & Gini, (2010) are the only researchers to study personal responsibility in bullying situations. They found that high levels of personal responsibility was associated with actively helping the victim and the role of the defender bystander whereas low levels of personal responsibility was associated with the role of the passive bystander. (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010). Pozzoli & Gini, (2010) suggested that more research needs to be conducted on the role personal responsibility plays in bullying situations. Consequently personal responsibility will be examined in relation to the different bystander participant roles.

### **1.11 Rationale of Study**

This study aims to fill a gap in the literature by looking at the relationship between self-efficacy, empathy and personal responsibility on bullying participant roles together. Previous studies as mentioned throughout this study have looked at these variables separately, with some measuring empathy and self-efficacy together, but to the best of our knowledge there is no other study that has examined the three variables together. Previous studies as mentioned have shown these variables to be predictors of defender and passive bystander behaviour on their own. This study aims to examine whether these variables intercorrelate with each other to predict whether or not someone will intervene in bullying situations. This study aims to examine if a person can have high self-efficacy beliefs and high levels of empathy and low levels of personal responsibility and still intervene on behalf of the victim.

Other studies as mentioned earlier have looked at these three variables primarily on the role of the defender and the passive bystander. This study aims to examine all three variables on the role of the bully, the victim, the defender and the passive bystander. Other researchers as mentioned have examined both empathy and self-efficacy across age and

gender, however Pozzoli & Gini, (2010) did not mention whether levels of personal responsibility changed across age and gender. This study aims to explore this.

### **1.12 Hypotheses of the Current Study**

The main aim of this research is to examine whether empathy, self-efficacy and personal responsibility effect the likelihood of a person participating in defending and passive behaviour in bullying situations and whether age and gender make a difference. This study has five hypotheses, these include;

**H1;** It is hypothesised that students scoring high on self-efficacy, empathy and personal responsibility will be associated with the defender role.

**H2;** It is hypothesised that students scoring low on self-efficacy, empathy and personal responsibility will be associated with the bullying and passive bystander roles.

**H3;** It is hypothesised that students scoring low on self-efficacy will be associated with the role of the victim.

**H4;** It is hypothesised that more females will participate in the defender role and more males will participate in the bullying and passive bystander roles.

**H5;** It is hypothesised that younger children will be associated with the defender role and older children will be associated with the passive bystander role.

## **Methodology**

### **2.1 Participants**

The sample used in this study was a non-probability convenience sample. The participants consisted of 172 post-primary school, first to sixth year students, ranging in age from 12 to 21. There were 67 males and 105 females, mean age (15.48, SD 1.64). The participants consisted of students from a mixed secondary school (N=84) and a youth group (N=88) within north county Dublin. They were recruited by contacting the school and youth groups to request permission to access their members for the purpose of this research. The secondary school pupils consisted of first, second and fifth year students while participants of youth groups consisted of all year groups.

### **2.2 Design**

This research was a quantitative, correlational mixed design. It consisted of a between group and within group aspect. The between group examined the relationship between empathy, self-efficacy and personal responsibility on the different participant roles for all students. The within group examined the relationship between empathy, self-efficacy and

personal responsibility on the different participant roles across age and gender. The predictor variables for hypothesis one to three consisted of the self-efficacy, empathy and personal responsibility variables while the criterion variables consisted of the different participant roles of the bully, victim, the defender and the passive bystander. The independent variables for hypothesis four and five were age and gender and the dependant variables were the defender, bully and passive bystander participant roles. The same questionnaire was administered to all participants.

### **2.3 Materials**

The material used in this research was a cross-sectional survey. The information page introduced the study and stated the aims of the research. See appendix 1. The participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time and ensured that all information provided was completely confidential. The first page of the questionnaire provided a definition of bullying from Salmivalli & Voeten, (2004) self-reported participant role questionnaire which stated that “bullying is when one child is repeatedly exposed to harassment and attacks from one or several other children. Harassment and attacks may be for example shoving or hitting the other one, calling him/her names, or making jokes about him/her, leaving him/her outside the group, taking his/her things or any other behaviour meant to hurt the other one. It is not bullying when two students of equal strength or equal power have a fight or when someone is occasionally teased but it is bullying when the feeling of one and the same student are intentionally and repeatedly hurt”. This page also looked for demographical information of the participant including the gender, age and class year. The measures used within the questionnaire were;

#### ***The self-reported participant role scale***

This is an amended version of Salmivalli participant role approach questionnaire that was developed by Pozzoli et al (2012). In this questionnaire students assessed their own behaviours during bullying episodes. Bullying others, defending the victim, being victimised and being a passive bystander were all assessed using three items with each one of the item measuring physical, verbal and relational bullying. Participants were asked to rate how often in the current school year they engaged in each behaviour described on a four point Likert scale from 1(never) to 4(almost always). For each participant bullying, defending, victim and passive bystander roles scores are rated by averaging their answers in the three items in each subscale. (Pozzoli et al, 2012; Pozzoli & Gini, 2010). An example of an item from bully subscale was “I hit or push some of my classmates”. An item from defender subscale included “I defend the classmates who are hit or attacked hard”. Passive bystander subscale item included “If a classmate is hit or threatened, I do nothing and don’t meddle”. Victim subscale item included “I know that someone spreads nasty rumours about me when I can’t hear”.

Pozzoli & Gini, (2010) suggested that the scale had good internal consistency and validity because all the standardized items were significant at the  $p < 0.001$ . The Cronbach Alpha score for the bully subscale was .62, the defender was .81, passive bystander was .67 and the victim was .67 when ran on SPSS.

### ***Revised pro-victim scale***

This scale was developed by Rigby & Slee (1991) to measure a bystander level of empathy towards a victim of bullying. Empathy is measured by ten items where participants rated their agreement on a three point Likert scale ranging from 1 (agree) to 3 (disagree). Items two, five, seven, nine and ten were reversed scored. Answers to the ten items are added for a total score of empathy. (Rigby & Slee, 1991). Examples of items were “Kids that get

picked on usually deserve it”, “A bully is really a coward”, “Soft kids make me sick” and “It makes me angry when a kid is picked on without reason”.

Lester, Cross, Shaw & Dooley, (2012) found that the validity of this scale was good with an average Cronbach Alpha score of 0.70. However when the researchers ran Cronbach Alpha on SPSS the score came back low at .41.

### ***Self-efficacy beliefs regarding peer intervention scale***

This scale was developed by Kingston (2008) to measure if participants of bullying felt they had the ability to intervene. It comprises of ten items where participants rated their agreement on a four point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Answers to the ten items were added for a total score of self-efficacy. (Kingston, 2008). Items one, four, nine and ten were reversed scored. Examples of items were “it is not my business to do anything about bullying”, “I can affect whether there is bullying in my class”, “If I try to help a classmate being bullied, the bully will turn on me” and “If I tell my teacher about bullying s/he will be able to help me”.

Kingston (2008) found this scale to have poor reliability with an alpha score of approximately .53. When the Cronbach Alpha score when ran for this research it came back as .70.

### ***Personal responsibility scale***

This scale was developed by Pozzoli & Gini (2010) to measure a bystander’s sense of responsibility to intervene on behalf of the victim. Personal responsibility was measured by four items where participants rated their agreement on a six point Likert scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 6 (totally agree). Answers to the four items were averaged to form a personality responsibility score. (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010). Items two and four were reversed

scored. The four items consisted of “Helping classmates who are repeatedly teased, hit or left out is my responsibility”, “In my classmates if someone is surrounded by mindless gossip, pushed or threatened I don’t have to do anything”, “It is my responsibility to find a way so that in my classroom nobody is insulted, excluded or attacked” and “It is not up to me to do something so that in my classroom nobody is repeatedly offended, pushed or left by themselves”. The Cronbach Alpha for this scale was .68. A full example of the questionnaire can be found in appendix 2.

The last page of the questionnaire provided a list of helplines available to adolescents that participants could keep. If the questionnaire was filled out online participants were informed to print this page before submitting their data. See appendix 3.

Other equipment that were used was a password protected laptop to store data and to write up results and SPSS version 22 to analyse data.

## **2.4 Procedure**

The current research was collected from a secondary school and youth group. The youth leaders of the youth group were given a link to the questionnaire online through Google Docs which they made available to their members. The youth leaders explained the purpose of the study and informed their members that they had a right to decline to participate. Members were instructed to fill out the questionnaire using the youth group computers. In the secondary school the principal randomly assigned which classes were to participate in the study based on the availability on the day. The questionnaires were administered by the teacher in the classroom. Students were made aware of what the study entailed, that they had a right to withdraw from participating and that if they had any questions to put up their hand and assistance would be given. Students were asked to be as honest as possible when completing the questionnaire and ensured that all information would

be remain confidential and anonymous. When all students had completed the questionnaire they were given a page with a list of helplines and websites for victims of bullying which they were told they could keep. This page can be found in the appendix.

## **2.5 Ethical consideration**

Formal ethical approval for this study was received from the psychology ethics committee at Dublin Business School. The principal and youth leaders acted in loco parentis for all participants as the majority of them were under eighteen. Participants were made aware on the cover page of the questionnaire that any information they provided was anonymous and confidential. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. However due to the anonymous nature of the questionnaire, once it was completed and handed in, there was no way to redraw data. On the last page of the questionnaire there was a sheet with helplines available which students could keep. If the questionnaire was filled online, participants were made aware that they needed to print this page. The researchers email addresses were also made available for any participants that had questions. The participants did not receive any incentives for taking part in this research.

## Results

### 3.1 Data Analysis

The data was entered into SPSS (version 22) to analyse the results by performing statistical tests. The data analysis involved performing descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

### 3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics summarized the data by providing the means and standard deviations of all the variables. The results are illustrated below in table 1.

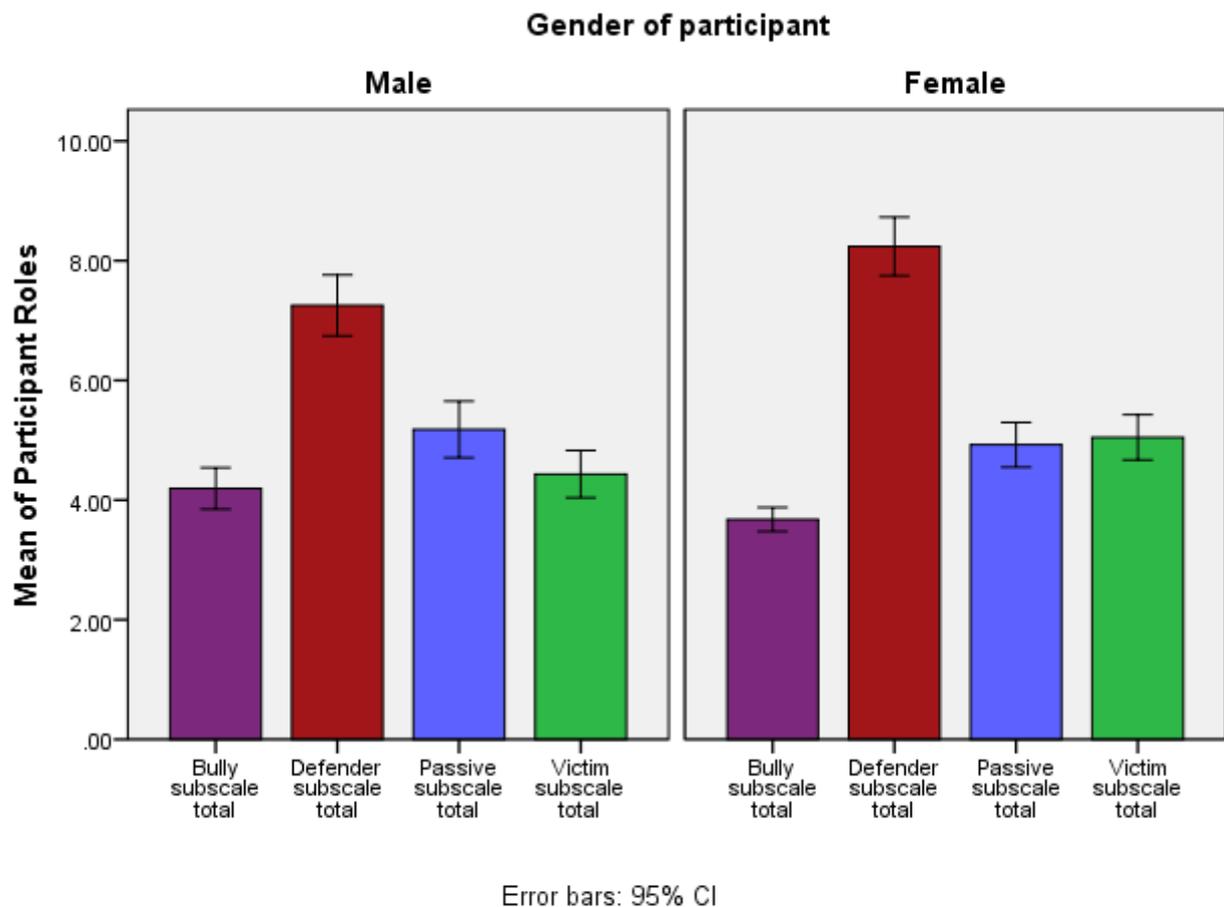
**Table 1;** *Descriptive Statistics of Psychological Measures*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Empathy	27.77	2.00

Self-Efficacy	20.94	4.20
Personal Responsibility	13.61	3.13
Bully	3.88	1.22
Victim	4.80	1.84
Defenders	7.85	2.40
Passive Bystander	5.02	1.93

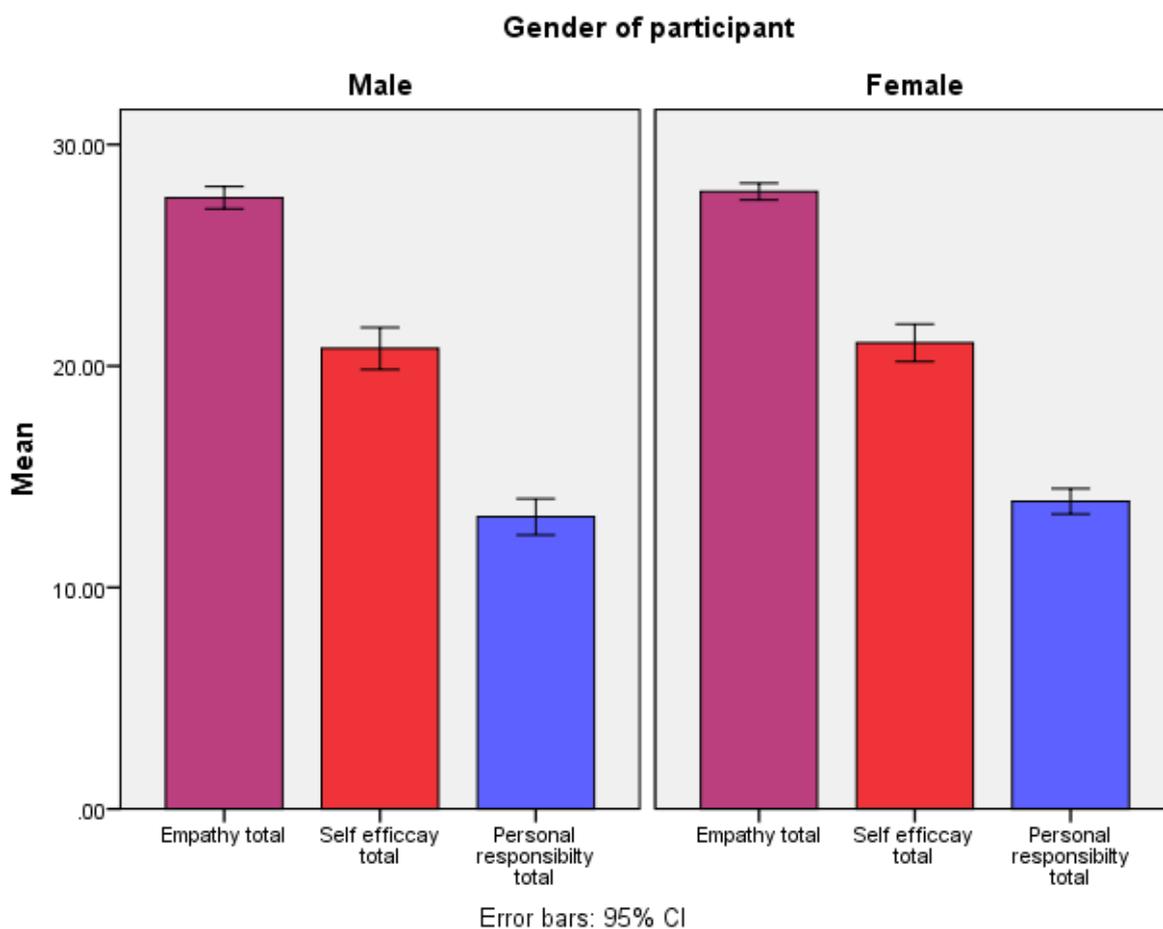
The range for empathy was 10.00 with a minimum score of 20.00 and maximum score of 30.00. The range for self-efficacy was 19.00 with a minimum score of 12.00 and maximum score of 31.00. The range for personal responsibility was 16.00 with a minimum score of 4.00 and maximum score of 20.00. The range for bully was 8.00 with a minimum score of 3.00 and a maximum score of 11.00. The range for victim was 7.00 with a minimum score of 3.00 and a maximum score of 10.00. The range for defender was 9.00 with a minimum score of 3.00 and a maximum score of 12.00. The range for the passive bystander was also 9.00 with a minimum score of 3.00 and a maximum score of 12.00. Out of all the participant roles table 1 shows that the defender had the highest mean value and the bully had the lowest mean value. Out of all the variables empathy had the highest mean value.

### 3.3 Means of Variables for Gender



**Figure 1;** A Bar Chart Comparing the Mean Scores for the Participant Roles of Bullying for Males and Females

Figure 1 above illustrates the mean scores for the participant roles of bullying for males and females. The mean scores for the defender role was the highest for both males and females compared to the passive bystander role. The means scores for the bully role was the lowest for both males and females, with males appearing slightly higher.



**Figure 2;** A Bar Chart Comparing the Mean Scores of Empathy, Self-Efficacy and Personal Responsibility for Males and Females

Figure 2 above shows the mean scores of empathy, self-efficacy and personal responsibility for male and females. Empathy appears higher for both male and females with personal responsibility appearing lower.

### 3.4 Percentages of the Participant Roles of Bullying

Table 2 below displays the valid statistics for bullying incidents. The statement “I offend or give nasty nicknames to some of my classmates” appears to be the highest incident of bullying with 26.2% of participants responding sometimes, 5.2% responding often and

1.2% responding almost always to this statements. Overall the majority of participants do not appear to engage in bullying incident

**Table 2;** *Valid Percentages of Bullying Incidents*

Question	Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
I hit or push some of my classmates	68.0%	27.9 %	4.1%	0%
I offend or give nasty nicknames to some of my classmates	67.4%	26.2%	5.2%	1.2%
I exclude some classmates from the group and I spread rumours about them when they don't hear	90.1%	8.7%	0.6%	0.6%

Table 3 below illustrates the valid statistics for victim incidents. The statement “I know that someone spreads nasty rumours about me when I can't hear” has the highest percentage with 28.5% of participants responding sometimes, 16.9% responding often and 8.7% responding almost always.

**Table 3;** *Valid Percentages of Victim Incidents*

Question	Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
I am attacked hard or pushed by some of my classmates	73.3%	22.7%	2.9%	1.2%

Some classmates give me nasty nicknames or offend me	54.1%	34.3%	8.7%	2.9%
I know that someone spreads nasty rumours about me when I can't hear	45.9%	28.5%	16.9%	8.7%

Table 4 below shows the valid percentages for defender incidents amongst participants. Defender incidents rates amongst participants appear to be high with the statement “I try to help or comfort classmates who are isolated or excluded from the group” having the highest percentages. 37.8% participants responded sometimes, 27.9% responded often and 23.3% responded almost always to this statement.

**Table 4;** *Valid Percentages of Defender Incidents*

Question	Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
I defend the classmates who are hit or attacked hard	12.2%	36.6%	27.9%	23.3%
I try to help or comfort classmates who are isolated or excluded from the group	8.1%	37.8%	27.9%	23.3%
If someone teases or threatens a classmate, I try to stop him/her	11.6%	41.3%	28.5%	18.6%

Table 5 below presents the valid percentages of passive bystander incidents of participants. The statement “When a classmate is hit or pushed I stand by and mind my own business” appears to have the highest percentages with 39.5% of participants responding sometimes, 8.1% responding often and 7.0% responding almost always.

**Table 5; Valid Percentages of Passive Bystander Incidents**

Question	Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
If a classmate is hit or threatened, I do nothing and I don't meddle	49.4%	34.3%	9.9%	6.4%
When a classmate is hit or pushed I stand by and mind my own business	45.3%	39.5%	8.1%	7.0%
If I know that someone is excluded or isolated from the group I act as if nothing has happened	58.7%	31.4%	8.7%	1.2%

### 3.5 Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics were used to measure whether there was a relationship between self-efficacy, empathy and personal responsibility with the defender, bully, victim and passive bystander roles. The statistical tests employed were a multiple and linear regression. Inferential statistics were also used to assess whether there was a relationship between age and gender on the defender, bullying and passive bystander roles. The statistical tests applied was a Mann Whitney U and a linear regression

### 3.6 Hypothesis 1

It is hypothesised that students scoring high on self-efficacy, empathy and personal responsibility will be associated with the defender role. Table 6 below summarises the results from a multiple regression.

**Table 6;** *A Multiple Regression Illustrating the Relationship Between Self-Efficacy, Empathy and Personal Responsibility on the Defender Role*

Variable's		Mean	SD	Df	P	R <sup>2</sup>	Beta	P	CI
Criterion	Predictors								Upper Lower
Defender		7.85	2.40	3, 168	.000	.198			
	Personal Responsibility	13.62	3.13				.30	.000	.106 .343
	Empathy	27.77	2.00				.03	.640	-.128 .208
	Self-Efficacy	20.94	4.19				-.24	.002	-.223 -.049

A multiple regression indicated that the three predictor variables self-efficacy, empathy and personal responsibility explained 20% of the variance ( $R^2=.198$ )  $f(3,168) = 15.07$ ,  $p < .001$ . It was found that personal responsibility significantly predicted whether someone was associated with the defender role ( $\beta = .30$ ,  $p < .001$ ) as did self-efficacy ( $\beta = -.24$ ,  $p = .002$ ). Empathy however was not strongly associated with the defender role ( $\beta = .03$ ,  $p = .640$ ). From these results the hypothesis can partially be accepted.

### 3.7 Hypothesis 2

It is hypothesised that students scoring low on self-efficacy, empathy and personal responsibility will be associated with the role of the bully. The results from a multiple regression are displayed in table 7 below

**Table 7;** *A Multiple Regression Showing the Relationship Between Self-Efficacy, Empathy and Personal Responsibility on the Role of the Bully*

Variables		Mean	SD	Df	P	R <sup>2</sup>	Beta	P	CI
Criterion	Predictors								Upper Lower
Bully		3.89	1.22	3, 168	.000	.112			
	Self-Efficacy	20.94	4.20				-.10	.203	-.077 .016
	Empathy	27.77	2.00				-.33	.000	-.294 -.114
	Personal Responsibility	13.61	3.13				-.10	.229	-.102 .025

A multiple regression illustrated that the three predictors of self-efficacy, empathy and personal responsibility explained 11% of the variance. ( $R^2 = .112$ ),  $F(3, 168) = 8.16$ ,  $p < .001$ ). It was found that high scores on empathy was associated with the bullying roles ( $\beta = -.33$ ,  $p < .001$ ). However it found that high scores on self-efficacy ( $\beta = -.10$ ,  $p = .203$ ) and personal responsibility ( $\beta = -.10$ ,  $p = .229$ ) were not. From these results we can partially accept the hypothesis as low scores on self-efficacy and personal responsibility are associated with the role of the bully but low scores on empathy are not associated with the bullying role.

Hypothesis two also suggested that low scores on self-efficacy, empathy and personal responsibility would be associated with the passive bystander role. The results from a multiple regression are illustrated in table 8 below.

**Table 8;** *A Multiple Regression Displaying the Relationship Between Self-Efficacy, Empathy and Personal Responsibility on the Passive Bystander Role.*

Variables	Mean	SD	Df	P	R <sup>2</sup>	Beta	P	CI
Criterion	Predictors							Upper Lower
Passive Bystander	5.02	1.93	3.168	.000	.119			
	Self-Efficacy	20.94	4.19			.24	.004	.036 .183
	Empathy	27.76	2.00			-.09	.205	-.233 .050
	Personal Responsibility	13.61	3.13			-.15	.072	-.191 .008

A multiple regression illustrated that the three predictor variables self-efficacy, empathy and personal responsibility explained 12% of the variance. ( $R^2 = .119$ ),  $F(3, 168) = 8.67$ ,  $p < .001$ ). It was found that high scores on self-efficacy ( $\beta = .24$ ,  $p = .004$ ) were associated with the passive bystander roles but high scores on empathy ( $\beta = -.09$ ,  $p = .205$ ) and personal responsibility ( $\beta = -.15$ ,  $p = .072$ ) were not associated with the passive bystander roles. From interpretation of these results we can partially accept the hypothesis as low scores on empathy and personal responsibility are associated with the passive bystander role but low scores on self-efficacy are not associated with the passive bystander role.

### 3.8 Hypothesis 3

It is hypothesised that students scoring low on self-efficacy will be associated with the role of the victim. Results from a linear regression are displayed in table 9 below.

**Table 9;** *A Linear Regression Showing the Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and the Role of the Victim*

Variables	Mean	SD	Df	P	R <sup>2</sup>	Beta	P	CI	
								Upper	Lower
Victim	4.80	1.84	1, 170	.282	.001				
Self-Efficacy	20.94	4.19				.08	.282	-.030	.103

A linear regression found that high scores were not significantly associated with the role of the victim. ( $F(1,170) = 1.164, p = .282, R^2 = .001$ ) (Self-efficacy beta = .08,  $p = .282$ ). The 95% confidence intervals illustrates that the population slope is between -.030 to -.103. From these results it can be accepted that low scores on self-efficacy are associated with the role of the victim.

### 3.9 Hypothesis 4

It is hypothesised that more females will participate in the defender role and more males will participate in the bullying and passive bystander roles. The results of a Mann-Whitney U are displayed below in table 10. A Mann-Whitney U illustrated that more females with a mean rank of 94.08 than males with a mean rank of 74.62 were more likely to participate in the defender role. ( $Z = -2.52, p = .012$ ). The test showed that males with a mean rank of 99.78 were more likely to participate in the bullying roles than females with a mean rank of 78.02. ( $Z = -3.03, p = .002$ ). The test displayed that males with a mean rank of 91.54 were also more likely to participate in the passive bystander role than females with a mean rank of 83.29. ( $Z = -1.08, p = .280$ )

**Table 10;** *A Mann-Whitney U Illustrating the Relationship Between Gender and the Defender, Bullying and Passive Bystander Roles*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Groups</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>P</b>
Defender	Male	74.62	-2.52	.012
	Female	94.08		
Bully	Male	99.78	-3.03	.002
	Female	78.02		
Passive Bystander	Male	91.54	-1.08	.280
	Female	83.29		

### 3.10 Hypothesis 5

It is hypothesised that older children will be associated with the passive bystander role. A linear regression was conducted to determine the effect that age has on the passive bystander role. The results are illustrated in table 11 below.

**Table 11;** *A Linear Regression Showing the Relationship Between Age and the Passive Bystander Role*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>CI</b>	
								<b>Upper</b>	<b>Lower</b>
Passive Bystander	5.02	1.93	1, 170	.906	-.006				
Age	15.48	1.64				-.009	.906	-.188	.167

It was found that older children were not correlated with the passive bystander role ( $f(1,170) = 0.14, p = .096$  (Age,  $\beta = -.009, p = .167$ ). The 95% confidence intervals illustrates that the population slope lies between  $-.188$  to  $.167$ . From these results we cannot accept the hypothesis.

It is hypothesised that younger children will be associated with the defender role. A linear regression was used to establish the effect that age has on the defender role. The results are displayed in table 12 below.

**Table 12;** *A Linear Regression Illustrating the Relationship Between Age and the Defender Role*

Variables	Mean	SD	Df	P	R <sup>2</sup>	Beta	P	CI	
								Upper	Lower
Defender	7.85	2.41	1, 170	.603	-.004				
Age	15.48	1.64				-.040	.603	-.280	.163

The linear regression showed that younger children were associated with the defender role. ( $f(1, 170) = .272$  (Age,  $\beta = -.040, p = .603$ ). The 95% confidence intervals showed that the population slope is between  $-.280$  to  $.163$ . From these results the hypothesis can be accepted.

## Discussion

### 4.1 Aim of Research

Bullying is a major problem within Irish society with 35.3% of primary school children and 36.4% of secondary school children being involved in bullying. (Minton, 2013). It can have devastating effects for all participants involved whether they are the bully, victim, the defender or the passive bystander. (Kaukiainen et al, 1999; Barhight et al, 2013; Tsang et al, 2011)

The primary aim of the current study was to investigate the relationship between empathy, self-efficacy and personal responsibility on the different bullying participant roles which included the role of the bully, victim, defender and passive bystander. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to 172 post primary school students.

### 4.2 Findings

This study had five different hypothesis that examined the three variables of self-efficacy, empathy and personal responsibility across the different participant's roles, age and gender. Hypothesis 1 predicted that students with high self-efficacy, empathy and personal responsibility would be associated with the defender role. A multiple regression suggested that personal responsibility and self-efficacy were good predictors but empathy was not. Therefore hypothesis 1 could only be partially accepted.

Hypothesis 2 suggested that students with low self-efficacy, empathy and personal responsibility would be associated with the bullying and passive bystander role. A series of multiple regressions illustrated that low scores on self-efficacy and personal responsibility were associated with the bullying role but low scores on empathy were not, and low scores on

empathy and personal responsibility were associated with the passive bystander roles but low scores on self-efficacy were not. Therefore hypothesis 2 could also only be partially accepted.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that students with low self-efficacy would be associated with the role of the victim. A linear regression displayed that low scores on self-efficacy were associated with the role of the victim, therefore hypothesis 3 could be accepted.

Hypothesis 4 suggested that more females would participate in the defender role and more males would participate in the bullying and passive bystander roles. A Mann-Whitney U showed that more females were more likely to participate in the defender role and that more males were likely to participate in the bullying and passive bystander roles, therefore hypothesis 4 can be accepted.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that younger children would be associated with the defender role and older children would be associated with the passive bystander role. A series of linear regressions illustrated that older children were not associated with the passive bystander role but that younger children were associated with the defender role, therefore hypothesis 5 could only be partially accepted.

### **4.3 Gender and Age**

The results of this study suggests that females are more likely to participate as a defender in bullying situations and males are more likely to take up the role of the bully. These results support previous research mentioned. (Salmivalli, 2010; Salmivalli & Voeten 2004). The results also suggest that more males will take up the role of the passive bystander. This contradicts previous research which proposes that more females will participate in this role. (Salmivalli, 2010; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). The result that girls are more likely to take up the role of the defender and become the protector of the victim supports Salmivalli &

Voeten, (2004) theory that social roles are key to the participant roles that bystanders take up. Girls are taught to be more nurturing and caring while boys are brought up to be more aggressive. This could also explain why males in this study were more likely to take up the role of the passive bystander.

The results from the current study suggests that younger children are more likely to be associated with the defender role. This is in line with previous research mentioned. (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010; Barhight et al, 2013; Salmivalli, 2010). The results from this study illustrated there was no correlation between age and the passive bystander. Previous research suggests that older children are associated with the passive bystander role but in this study did not seem to be the case. (Hutchinson, 2012; Salmivalli et al, 1998; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). The discrepancies between the results of this study and previous research in regards to age and gender could be a limitation of this study. Age and gender were not evenly distributed across the sample. A sample with more evenly distributed variance of age and gender may provide different results that are more consistent with previous research.

#### **4.4 Self-Efficacy**

Results of the current study suggests that high levels of self-efficacy are associated with the defender role and low levels of self-efficacy are associated with the role of the bully and the victim, which is in line with previous research mentioned. (Tsung et al, 2011; Thornberg & Jungert, 2013; Gini et al, 2007, Gini et al, 2008). This supports Kokkinos & Kipritsi, (2012) theory that people with high levels of self-efficacy are more able to deal with problems in a preserving and anxiety free manor. Whereas people with low self-efficacy are more likely to develop maladaptive behaviours which leads them to take up the role of the bully or the victim. (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012).

The results from this study illustrated that high self-efficacy was also associated with the passive bystander role. This was inconsistent with previous studies mentioned. (Tsung et al, 2011; Thornberg et al, 2013; Gini et al, 2007; Gini et al, 2008). Poyhonen et al, (2010) stated that a limitation of previous studies on self-efficacy and bullying was that researchers were not using a scale of self-efficacy that was directly linked to bullying behaviour but instead were using a general scale of self-efficacy. This is a problem that this study aimed to address by using the self-efficacy beliefs regarding peer intervention scale which was developed by Kingston (2008). This scale gave participants statements of self-efficacy in regard to bullying situations. Due to this study employing this self-efficacy scale instead of a general self-efficacy scale this could explain the inconsistency of the results compared to previous research. To the best of the researcher's knowledge this scale has only been used once before in Kingston (2008) study so more research would need to be done to verify the current study results.

#### **4.5 Empathy**

The results of the current study states that low levels of empathy are associated with the defender and passive bystander roles. This contradicts previous research by Caravita et al, (2008) that stated that out of all the participant roles of bullying empathy was highly associated with defender behaviours. Despite this it supports Gini et al, (2008) suggestion that empathy is not a sufficient predictor of pro-social behaviour and that other factors need to be taken into account when looking at bystander interventions.

The results also suggest that high levels of empathy were associated with the role of the bully. This contradicts previous research (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2004; Gini et al, 2007) but supports Sutton et al, (1999) suggestion that bullies have good theory of mind skills and are able to understand other people's mental states and use them against them.

#### **4.6 Personal Responsibility**

The results of this study illustrates that high levels of personal responsibility was associated with the role of the defender and low levels of personal responsibility was associated with the role of the bully and the passive bystander. This supports the results found by Pozzoli & Gini, (2010) that high levels of personal responsibility was associated with actively helping the victim and the role of the defender bystander whereas low levels of personal responsibility was associated with the role of the passive bystander. Apart from the current study the only other research conducted on personal responsibility was by Pozzoli & Gini, (2010) so further research needs to be done. Since the results of this research is conclusive with that of Pozzoli & Gini, (2010) it can be suggested that personal responsibility is crucial in whether a person intervenes on behalf of a victim of bullying or not.

#### **4.7 Strengths & Weaknesses**

The current study has many strengths and weaknesses. The main strength is that it is adding to the literature on bullying by examining the relationship between self-efficacy, empathy and personal responsibility. Personal responsibility in relation to bullying and the different participate roles is not well researched. The current study draws attention to it and helps raise awareness of how important it potentially can be, in understanding what participant roles people will take up and whether or not someone will intervene on behalf of the victim. This study also used a relevantly new measure of self-efficacy which is directly related to bullying situations. (Kingston, 2008). This helps highlight how efficient students believe they are in bullying situations and how beneficial their actions might be. The current study helps raise awareness of this measure which might be used in future bullying research.

As well as strengths this study also has a number of weaknesses. The main one being the gender imbalance in the sample which consists of 67 males and 105 females. This could

have slightly affected the results found. Another limitation of the current study is that the Cronbach Alpha scores for the revised pro-victim scale (Rigby & Slee, 1991) to be quite low at .41. The data also did not appear to be normal and broke many of the rules for parametric tests therefore suitable non-parametric tests were used. However since there is no non-parametric equivalent to a regression, these were used for analysis which might have hindered results. Other weaknesses included the self-reported participant role questionnaire. (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010). The participants might have been inclined to mark themselves in a favourable light even though the questionnaire was confidential and anonymous. If this was a peer reviewed questionnaire the results might have been quite different. The last weaknesses of this study is that it only looked at traditional bullying and did not take into account cyber bullying.

#### **4.8 Future Research**

Cyber bullying is becoming more prevalent in today society and would be an important area for future research. Future research could try and establish the participating roles in cyber bullying and how variables such as personal responsibility, empathy and self-efficacy can play in determining these. Future research could also examine the relationship between empathy, self-efficacy and empathy on the participant roles in bullying with primary school students and college students. A longitudinal study could also be beneficial as this would allow the researcher to examine when personal responsibility, empathy and self-efficacy plays the biggest role in people taking up a certain participant role and if it changes with age. If researchers could gain this information they could maximise on it by developing informed bullying intervention plans. Another possible avenue for future research would be to develop an intervention plan for schools and assess the effectiveness of it. This could include developing bullying workshop for students which aims to promote a person self-

efficacy, empathy and personal responsibility in bullying situations and measure bystander intervention afterwards.

This study has important real life implications as bullying is a social phenomenon affecting the majority of schools and students. By carrying out research on bullying more awareness of the issue is created. In order for real changes to occur in the preventions of bullying behaviour more effective education needs to be given to staff and students on the area of bullying participant roles. If researchers can understand the variables that affect what participate roles people decide to assume then they be able to develop effective intervention plans to tackle bullying.

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

To conclude the main findings of the current study were that high levels of self-efficacy and personal responsibility were associated with the role of the defender. Low levels of self-efficacy and personal responsibility was associated with the role of the bully and low levels of empathy and personal responsibility was associated with the passive bystander role. Low levels of self-efficacy was also associated with the role of the victim. More females were associated with the defender role and more males were associated with the passive bystander and bullying roles. Younger children were associated with the role of the defender.

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## **Appendix 1- Information Sheet**

Thank you for taking part in this research. My name is Michelle and I am a final year psychology student at Dublin Business School. I am currently undertaking a research project examining bullying and the different participant roles involved and how these relate to empathy, self-efficacy and personal responsibility. Empathy is someone's ability to share and understand the feelings of someone else. Self-efficacy is a person belief in their ability to perform well. The main aim of gathering this information is to gain a better understanding of why people do or do not get involved in bullying and in doing so help put a stop to bullying altogether.

Any information that you provide in this questionnaire is completely confidential so please answer as truthfully as possible. Your principal, teachers and classmates will not be shown your answers.

Please **do not** put your name on the questionnaire. If at any time you feel uncomfortable please feel free to stop completing the questionnaire. If you are affected by any of the issues raised in this questionnaire there is a list of helplines and websites provided at the end which you are welcome to keep

If you have any questions regarding this questionnaire you can contact myself or my supervisor Pauline Hyland

Michelle-

Pauline-

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

Michelle

## Appendix 2; Questionnaire

### Bullying Questionnaire

Bullying is when one child is repeatedly exposed to harassment and attacks from one or several other children. Harassment and attacks may be for example shoving or hitting the other one, calling him/her names, or making jokes about him/her, leaving him/her outside the group, taking his/her things or any other behaviour meant to hurt the other one. It is not bullying when two students of equal strength or equal power have a fight or when someone is occasionally teased but it is bullying when the feelings of one and the same student are intentionally and repeatedly hurt.

Age

Gender

## Class Year

### Question 4

For each of the following items rate how often in the current school year you have engaged in the behaviour described. Please tick the answer most appropriate for you

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
I hit or push some of my classmates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I offend or give nasty nicknames to some of my classmates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I exclude some classmates from the group and I spread rumours about them when they don't hear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I defend the classmates who are hit or attacked hard	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to help or comfort classmates who are isolated or excluded from the group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If someone teases or threatens a classmate I try to stop him/her	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If a classmate is hit or threatened, I do nothing and I don't meddle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When a classmate is hit or pushed I stand by and mind my own business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I know that someone is excluded or isolated from the group I act as if nothing has happened	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am attacked hard hit or pushed by some classmates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Some classmates give me nasty nicknames or offend me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
I know that someone spreads nasty rumours about me when I can't hear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Question 5

Read each of the following sentences carefully and show how strong you agree or disagree with it. Please tick the answer most appropriate for you

	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
Kids that get picked on a lot usually deserve it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A bully is really a coward	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kids should not complain about being bullied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is funny to see kids get upset when they are teased	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kids who hurt others weaker than themselves should be told off	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Soft kids make me sick	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You should not pick on someone who is weaker than you	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nobody likes a wimp	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It makes me angry when a kid is picked on without reason	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like it when someone sticks up for kids who are being bullied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Question 6

Read each of the following sentences carefully and show how strongly you agree or disagree with it. Please tick the answer most appropriate for you

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
It is not my business to do anything about bullying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can affect whether there is bullying in my class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would know what to do to help someone being bullied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I try to help a classmate being bullied, the bully will turn on me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I tell my teacher about bullying s/he will be able to help	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students who try to stop bullying are usually successful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My friends support me when I try to stop bullying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bullying has been discussed in my class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students who try to stop bullying are usually bullied next	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It makes no	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
difference whether students intervene in bullying				

## Question 7

Read each of the following sentences carefully and show how strongly you agree or disagree with it. Please tick the answer most appropriate for you

	Totally Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally Disagree
Helping classmates who are repeatedly teased, hit or left out is my responsibility	<input type="radio"/>				
In my classroom if someone is surrounded by mindless gossip, pushed or threatened I don't have to do anything	<input type="radio"/>				
It is my responsibility to find a way so that in my classroom nobody is insulted, excluded or attacked	<input type="radio"/>				
It is not up to me to do something so that in my classroom nobody is repeatedly offended, pushed or left by themselves	<input type="radio"/>				

## **Appendix 3- Contact Details for Support Services**

# Please Keep This Page

### **Support Services**

If you are a victim of bullying or are affected by any of the issues raised in this questionnaire please talk to someone. You can talk to your parents, teachers, principals and youth workers.

If you do not feel comfortable talking to your parents, teachers, principal or youth workers please make use of the helplines below

#### **Childline**

1. Call 1800 66 66 66. This helpline is opened 24 hours a day and is completely confidential and anonymous
2. Go to [www.childline.ie](http://www.childline.ie) to use one on one live chat
3. Text BULLY to 50101. This service is available from 10am-10pm every day. This is a live one to one text messaging support services for children and young people affected by bullying

#### **Samaritans**

1. Call 116 123

2. Email [jo@samaritians.org](mailto:jo@samaritians.org)