



## ABSTRACT

This poster examines the impact of a Safe Schools course for pre-service teachers on bullying knowledge, likelihood to meet mandatory reporting requirements in situations involving violence, and the role of moral disengagement as a possible mediator of change. Moral disengagement (the extent to which individuals see violent behaviours as not a problem or not their responsibility) has been implicated in bullying and provides one framework for conceptualizing relevant teacher attitudes.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Research has shown that teacher responses to violence-related issues have a significant impact on ending or continuing bullying and other forms of violence<sup>[1]</sup>. However, teachers generally have low intervention and response rates in bullying incidents<sup>[2]</sup>. This ineffective response emboldens perpetrators and makes things worse for victims<sup>[3,4]</sup>. Therefore, pre-service teachers need to receive specific instruction that targets the key determinants of the effective intervention and response.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Does the Safe Schools Course have a positive impact on the attitudes, knowledge and self-efficacy of teacher candidates with respect to bullying and other safe schools issues?
2. Does the Safe Schools Course lead to positive impacts beyond those that would be gained through other courses and practical experience?

### Participants

- 157 pre-service teachers (75% female/25% male), who were enrolled in the Course during the first semester of the teacher preparation program.
- A second group included 199 pre-service students (61% female/26% male) from the second semester of the teacher preparation program (comparison group to validate moral disengagement and the effects of the intervention).

### Measures

Pre and post-test survey, developed specifically for this study, measures attitudes related to moral disengagement, bullying knowledge, and self-efficacy with respect to mandated reporting and responding.

### Intervention

The Safe School Course, offered in the Faculty of Education at Western University, focuses on developing awareness, empathy, confidence, and skills to intervene effectively in the wide range of school violence-related issues.

### Procedure:

1. Students in the Fall semester were invited to complete a survey during the first and last class of their fall semester with a researcher explaining the purpose of the study.
2. Another cohort was invited to complete a one-time survey at the beginning of the winter semester.

## METHOD

## FINDINGS

### Research Question #1:

#### Finding #1: Moral disengagement decreased.

The difference was statistically significant ( $F_{(df=1)} = 6.0, p < .05$ ).

#### Finding #2: Knowledge about bullying increased.

The mean difference with a repeated measures GLM produced a Greenhouse-Geisser  $F_{(1)}=9.4, p < .01$ .

#### Finding #3: Mandated reporting and responding increased.

The mean difference with a repeated measures GLM produced a Greenhouse-Geisser  $F_{(1)}=20.8, p < .01$ .

### Research Question #2:

Results (Table 1) indicate that the students did not learn the same knowledge or have the same attitudinal change based on the passage of time and involvement in other courses and practical experience.



Table 1. Intervention pre-post scores and waitlist comparison scores on outcomes.

	Intervention Pre-test Scores Compared to Waitlist Comparison				Intervention Post-test Scores Compared to Waitlist Comparison			
	Intervention Pre-test	Waitlist comparison	$F_{(df=1)}$	$p$	Intervention Post-test	Waitlist comparison	$F_{(df=1)}$	$p$
Moral disengagement	26.61 (5.2)	27.18 (5.6)	.92	ns	25.48 (6.3)	27.18 (5.6)	6.5	< .05
Bullying knowledge	4.9 (1.2)	4.6 (1.3)	3.2	ns	5.3 (1.4)	4.6 (1.3)	16.2	< .01
Mandated reporting	42.0 (4.4)	43.0 (4.9)	3.1	ns	44.5 (5.7)	43.0 (4.9)	6.6	< .05

## IMPLICATIONS

- The Safe Schools course was effective at increasing bullying knowledge, the likelihood of recognizing and meeting reporting requirements, and decreasing moral disengagement in pre-service teachers.
- Targeting moral disengagement by increasing awareness, empathy, and self-efficacy may increase the likelihood of intervene and appropriate responding in the wide range of violence-related issues.
- Establishing courses in the area of safe schools represents a proactive response to the current situation where the gap between bullying knowledge and effective intervention in school system need to be addressed before teachers are out in the field.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Additionally inquiry is needed to clarify to participants' perceptions of the more general impact of the course on professional development and preparation. Furthermore, the role of moral disengagement as a potential mediator of changes requires further investigation.

## REFERENCES

