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NEWSLETTER

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## Healthy Context Paradox of Being Bullied and Externalizing Problems among Adolescents

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**H**EALTHY Context Paradox mainly refers to the situation where the bullied adolescents tend to show more psychological problems, such as depression and anxiety, while the surroundings are relatively low in bullying level. A study published in *Acta Psychologica Sinica* further conducted in-depth research exploring this counterintuitive psychological phenomenon, analyzing the relationship between being bullied and externalizing problems. Specifically, students' externalizing problems represent explicit misbehaviors.

In terms of model construction, researchers set the average level of being bullied within a class as moderating variables and taking hostile attribution bias as mediating variables. The results are as follows:

- Between the level of individual being bullied and externalizing problems, the former can significantly positively predict externalizing problems, while the level in the class did not predict externalizing problems directly, which adjusted the correlations, the lower the level, the higher the frequency of individual externalizing problems, as a result, presenting the “Healthy Context Paradox” phenomenon.
- After the inclusion of mediating variables, the average level of bullying in the class significantly negatively predicted the relationship between the experience of being bullied and the hostile attribution bias. As for the class with a higher average level of bullying, the relationship between the experience of being bullied and the hostile attribution bias was relatively weak.

These results suggest that hostile attribution bias plays a mediating role in the Healthy Context Paradox. Although the classroom environment is relatively positive, the students tend to become more “incompatible” as long as they are bullied, and then their hostile attribution bias will increase, and more externalization problems will occur.

The researchers suggest that after a bullying incident, teachers should help the victim by forming the proper attributional pattern. In addition, in the

daily teaching work, teachers can design games and activities aimed at promoting positive interaction between classmates to help students build good peer beliefs and reduce the hostile attribution bias of bullied individuals.

*Source: Acta Psychologica Sinica, 2021; 53(2):170-181.*