



An investigation into the relationship between perceived peer pressure, perceived parental pressure and defending behaviour in bullying amongst university students.

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ABSTRACT

Bullying is a complex social situation which is prevalent in a wide range of environments. It can have damaging consequences for the individuals on the receiving end of the harmful actions, but also for the individuals who witness the situation, known as bystanders. There is a wide body of research investigating the dynamics of bullying situations throughout schools; however there is a limited amount of research on the bullying roles and dynamics within universities. The current study aimed to investigate the relationship between perceived peer and parental pressures to intervene within bullying, and defending behaviour amongst university students. In the current study, 85 university students completed a questionnaire examining their perceived peer pressure, perceived parental pressure to intervene and defending behaviour when they witness a bullying episode. The data was analysed using a multiple regression and it was found that both predictors were positively related with defending behaviour in bullying. However, perceived peer pressure was found to significantly predict defending behaviour amongst university students, whereas perceived parental pressure was not a significant predictor of defending behaviour. Therefore the results suggest that peers are more influential in determining an individual's intention to intervene within a bullying situation amongst university students.

KEY WORDS:	PERCEIVED PEER PRESSURE	PERCEIVED PARENTAL PRESSURE	DEFENDING BEHAVIOUR	BULLYING	UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
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Introduction

Bullying is a complex social situation which often involves an individual being open to deliberate, negative and harmful behaviours by other more powerful individuals over a prolonged period (Olweus, 1993). It can have a range of detrimental and damaging consequences for the victim's physical and psychological wellbeing. Past research has found that victims of bullying show increased levels of negative somatic symptoms such as headaches and sickness; increased levels of depression and anxiety and increased levels of suicidal behaviours (Arseneault et al. 2010; Baldry, 2004; Barzilay et al. 2017; Lereya et al. 2015). The psychological difficulties associated with the onset of bullying have been found to persist throughout childhood and even adulthood (Lereya et al. 2015; Wolke and Lereya, 2015). Therefore it is important for research to understand the dynamics and social circumstances surrounding bullying in order to develop intervention strategies which can prevent bullying across a range of contexts and improve the psychological wellbeing of victims.

Throughout the past twenty-five years, there has been an increased body of research which has explored the various participant roles involved in bullying. Salmivalli et al. (1996) identified additional roles involved within bullying situations, as well as the bully and the victim. These roles include the reinforcers, the assistants of the bully, the defenders of the victim and the outsiders. Of particular interest within this body of research has been the roles played by the bystanders, these roles include the defenders and the passive bystanders. Bystanders are important in the bullying situation because they are witnesses to the harm inflicted upon the victims and they have the opportunity to intervene and prevent the situation from escalating any further. The role of the defender has been described as someone who steps into the bullying situation and actively intervenes to try and protect the victim from further abuse (Porter and Smith-Adock, 2017; Salmivalli et al. 1996). On the other hand, the passive bystander describes individuals who do not get involved within the bullying situation and may even ignore the fact that it is happening (Coloroso, 2005; Salmivalli et al. 1996). Most research to-date has attempted to investigate the possible underlying factors which may lead some individuals to intervene in bullying and others to act passively within these situations. It is important to gain an understanding of these possible factors in order to tailor interventions so that bystander defending behaviour within bullying situations is increased as long as it is safe to do so.

This current research into bystander behaviour within bullying situations has tended to focus on the influence of individual and personality characteristics. One significant characteristic which has been the basis of much research into defending behaviour within bullying is empathy. Empathy has been found to positively correlate with both high levels of defending behaviour and passive bystander behaviour and therefore research suggests that other factors most moderate bystander intervention in these contexts (Gini et al. 2008; Lambe et al. 2017; Pozzoli and Gini, 2010; Yun and Graham, 2018). Defending behaviour has also been found to be associated with females more than males (Kollerová et al. 2018; Lambe et al. 2017; van der Ploeg et al. 2017; Yun and Graham, 2018), younger students more than older students (Lambe et al. 2017) and popularity within their friendship groups (Kollerová et al. 2018; Yun and Graham, 2018). These findings may be beneficial in regards to who the possible intervention strategies should be aimed at such as peer mentors and

tutoring within educational settings (Davis and Davis, 2007). However, it is also important to consider the contextual and social factors which can influence an individual's decision to intervene when witnessing bullying.

The theory of planned behaviour proposed by Ajzen (1991) suggests that specific behaviours will be carried out by an individual depending on their intention to complete that behaviour. The individual's intentions of carrying out the behaviour are determined by three main aspects that include their attitudes on the behaviour, the perceived behavioural control of that individual and the subjective norms. Ajzen (1991) suggests that the degree to which each of these three factors can influence an individual's intention to carry out a behaviour varies depending on the situation. Consequently there are times when subjective norms may carry significantly more weight than an individual's attitudes and their perceived behavioural control in influencing their intentions to carry out a particular behaviour. However, within the theory of planned behaviour Ajzen (1991:188) suggests that the subjective norms are defined as 'the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform the behaviour.' This suggests that there is a possibility that individuals can make errors in their perceptions of social norms (Hymel et al. 2015). So it is beneficial to understand the possible weight social norms may have in influencing an individual's bystander behaviour within bullying, because if they significantly link with an individual's intention to intervene then this may suggest that educational programmes should tailor strategies to promote positive beliefs about intervening throughout education.

The theory of planned behaviour has had particular relevance in a number of studies which assess the relationship between subjective social norms and bystander behaviour within bullying situations amongst children and adolescents (Casey et al. 2017; Pozzoli et al. 2012). Casey et al. (2017) conducted focus groups with adolescents from the United States in order to explore the influences of bystander behaviour within bullying situations. Overall, they found that individuals would be more likely to intervene when they held attitudes such as; intervening within bullying would gain them self-respect, whereas attitudes such as bullying is meaningless led individuals to be passive in these situations. With regards to perceived behavioural control, the level of confidence the participants had in their ability to intervene was reported to determine their intention to defend the victim of bullying. In addition, they found that subjective norms which lead to intervention tend to be that significant social figures would want the individuals to intervene and do what is right. However there were a number of subjective norms which would inhibit bystander intervention such as their parents wanting them to stay safe or their peers viewing bullying as a form of entertain even though they know it is wrong. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, it fails to determine which social figures may be the most influential in the level of defending and passive bystander behaviour within bullying situations.

Therefore, a number of studies conducted with school students have attempted to determine the relationship between defending behaviour and perceived social pressures to intervene from a variety of social figures within bullying situations (Kollerová et al. 2018; Pozzoli and Gini, 2010; Pozzoli et al. 2012; Rigby and Johnson, 2006). These studies have all found perceived expectations from peers significantly and positively correlate with an individual's intention to intervene within bullying. In addition, some of the studies have found that perceived expectations from teachers to intervene were not relevant to the student's intentions to defend

within bullying situations (Rigby and Johnson, 2006; Kollerová et al. 2018). It has been suggested that the most influential social figures for individuals are those that the individual has a special bond with and those who they see frequently throughout a number of contexts (Paluck and Shepherd, 2012). Therefore, peers may be more influential in influencing an individual's defending behaviour within bullying situations because they tend to spend large amounts of time interacting with their peers during and outside of the school setting. Whereas teachers may have little influence because their only interaction is usually within the school environment.

Furthermore, Rigby and Johnson (2006) aimed to investigate the relationship between a range of personal and social factors with an individual's intention to intervene within bullying. They concluded that perceived expectations from peers and both parents to intervene within bullying was able to predict defending behaviour, however perceived expectations from teachers to intervene failed to predict defending behaviour. These findings fit with the view that the most influential figures of norms are those that the individual has the most contact with because children and young adolescents tend to spend more time with their peers and parents. It has also been suggested that the influence of perceived teacher expectations in intervening in bullying may not be significant because some students tend to ignore the teacher's opinions and become wary of those in powerful positions, especially in adolescence (Rigby and Bagshaw, 2003; Rigby and Johnson, 2006).

The majority of the research that investigates the influence of perceived social pressures on defending and passive bystander behaviour in bullying tends to use samples which consist of children and adolescents (Kollerová et al. 2018; Pozzoli and Gini, 2010; Pozzoli et al. 2012; Rigby and Johnson, 2006). However, bullying is not just confined to the school setting. It is a problem which is prevalent throughout a range of social contexts such as the workplace and universities (Doğruer and Yaratan, 2014). More research is needed into bullying throughout university, because the transition to university can be a particularly daunting and isolating time for some individuals. The added contribution of bullying throughout their time at university can also contribute to an increase in isolation and psychological difficulties (Doğruer and Yaratan, 2014). So the actions of bystanders within this environment could either improve the victim's time at university or make it increasingly worse, depending on whether the bystanders intervene or remain passive to the situation. Throughout university, students develop independence which means that they become more involved with the wider society and have more interactions with their peers (Sokol, 2009). A lot of students tend to move away from their parents and move in with peers at university, which also leads to greater interaction with peers and fewer interactions with their parents (Arnett, 2000). Therefore, it could be assumed that the perceived expectations of peers to intervene may be more influential on a university student's bystander behaviour compared to the perceived expectations for intervention of parents in bullying. Understanding the possible predictors of defending and passive bystander behaviour within bullying will help inform universities on where to target interventions in order to increase defending behaviour and reduce the negative outcomes for victims of bullying.

The previous literature concludes that both perceived pressure from peers and perceived pressure from parental figures significantly predict defending behaviour in bullying amongst school students. Therefore the aim of this current study was to

investigate if the two predictor variables, perceived peer pressure and perceived parental pressure can predict the criterion variable that is defending behaviour in bullying amongst university students. This aim is analysed through the use of a multiple regression analysis.

As a result of the previous research findings on bystander behaviour within bullying, two hypotheses were formulated:

1. Perceived peer pressure will significantly predict defending behaviour within bullying situations.
2. Perceived parental pressure will significantly predict defending behaviour within bullying situations.

Method

Design

The current study used a non-experimental correlational design in order to investigate the relationship between two predictor variables and a criterion variable. The two predictor variables in this study were perceived peer pressure and perceived parental pressure. The criterion variable of this study was defending behaviour. The study required the participants to complete an online questionnaire, which included demographic questions and three scales. Self-reported measures were used as it allowed participants to rate their answers based on a general bullying situation they have witnessed, instead of presenting them with potentially harmful stimuli of bullying. A questionnaire was also used because it allows for the collection of a large number of responses, so that a multiple regression analysis can be conducted on this data (Fife-Schaw, 2012).

Participants

A total of 89 university students took part in the current study, which were recruited from the university research participation pool website. The participants were recruited by an opportunity sample because only individuals who were available and willing to take part completed the questionnaires. Four of the participants were removed from the data because they failed to complete all questions provided in the questionnaire. Therefore this resulted in a sample size of 85 participants. The current study originally aimed to recruit 106 participants, as Green (1991) suggests the ideal sample size for a multiple regression should be $N > 104 + 2$ (Wilson Van Voorhis and Morgan, 2007). However, this target sample size was not obtained.

There were a total of 74 females and 11 males who participated in the current study. The participants age ranged from 18 to 52 years ($M = 21.47$, $SD = 5.42$). Out of the 85 university students, 39 (45.9%) reported living with friends, 29 (34.1%) reported living with parents, 8 (9.4%) reported living with a partner, 7 (8.2%) reported living alone, 1 (1.2%) participant reported that they lived with a sibling and 1 (1.2%) preferred not to state their current living arrangements. This supports research mentioned in the introduction, that a large majority of university students live away from the parents during their time at university (Arnett, 2000).

Materials

The current study presented the participants with an online questionnaire which they could complete during their own time. This questionnaire was used to investigate the relationship of perceived peer pressure and perceived parental pressure with defending behaviour within bullying situations. Information on the study, consent form and debrief were also presented alongside the online questionnaire (see appendix 3, 4 and 6). In addition to this information, the questionnaire collected demographic data from the participants. These questions collected information concerning the participants age, gender and their current living arrangements at the time of the study (see appendix 5).

Defending Behaviour. The level of the participants defending behaviour within bullying situations was measured by using an adapted version of the Participant Role Questionnaire (PRQ; see appendix 5). The PRQ was developed by Salmivalli et al.

(1996) and it consisted of 5 subscales: the bully (10 items), the reinforcer (7 items), the assistant (4 items), the defender (20 items) and the outsider (7 items). The PRQ was originally used with school students and involved a peer evaluation scale where participants would rate the extent that they felt each individual from their class fit each item. However, due to the fact that the current study was using a sample of university students it was decided to use the questionnaire as a self-reported measure. The decision was also taken to only use the defender and outsider subscales because this study wanted to investigate the impact of the predictors on the level of defending behaviour. The following item 'fetches the teacher in charge' from the defender scale was removed because it was not applicable to the social environment of university students. In addition, any items that included the word 'teacher' were reworded to 'trusted adult' because teachers are not relevant within the university context. Therefore there were a total of 26 items within this measure. Participants were asked to rate the extent they believe they behaved in accordance to the 26 items when witnessing a bullying situation. They had to rate each item on a 4-point scale from 1 (Never) to 4 (Always). Examples of some of the items include: 'Doesn't take sides with anyone' and 'Fetches a trusted adult'. Items 4, 8, 13, 16, 18, 19 and 25 belong to the outsider scale and were therefore reverse scored (see appendix 5). Consequently a high score on the adapted PRQ scale represented a high level of defending behaviour and a lower score represented passive bystander behaviour.

Perceived Peer and Parental Pressure. Both the perceived peer pressure and the perceived parental pressure were measured by using the perceived peer and parental normative scales (Pozzoli and Gini, 2010; Pozzoli and Gini, 2012). On this scale participants were asked to rate the extent that certain social figures (peers and a parental figure) expected them to behave in accordance with 4 items when witnessing bullying. The four items included: 1. Intervene to help the victim, 2. Advise an adult of what is happening so that he or she intervenes, 3. Do nothing because it's none of my business and 4. Do nothing because I could get into trouble (Pozzoli and Gini, 2010; Pozzoli and Gini, 2012). The participants were asked to rate each item on a 4-point scale from 1 (Not at all) to 4 (Extremely). Both items 3 and 4 were reversed scored, so that a higher score indicated greater perceived pressure from the social figure and a lower score indicated lower levels of perceived pressure from the social figure to intervene (see appendix 5).

Procedure

Before the data collection commenced ethical approval was gained from the MMU Ethics Committee (see appendix 1). The participants were invited to take part in the current study through accessing the university's research participation pool. The advertisement of the study on the research participation pool provided participants with a brief description of the aims of the study and what they would be required to do if they decided to participate (see appendix 8). The questionnaire was accessible by an anonymous link through the research participation pool which would direct them to the questionnaire on Qualtrics. The questionnaire was made up of an information page (see appendix 3), consent form (see appendix 4), the adapted Participant Role Questionnaire (Salmivalli et al. 1996), the perceived social pressures scales (Pozzoli and Gini, 2012) and a debrief (see appendix 6).

The participants were informed that in order to participate in this study they had to be current university students and by completing the questionnaire they would receive 10 participation pool credits. Once the participants signed up to the study, the link that was provided took them to the online questionnaire which allowed them to complete it during their own time and on any electronic device. The participants were first presented with the study information page which provided details of the study and the researchers contact details. This page also stated that they had the right to withdraw from the study any time up until the data collection deadline. They were then directed to the consent form which listed a number of statements regarding their agreement to take part within the study. They were asked to read all the statements and select the consent button if they agreed to the use of the data they provided within the research. The participants were then asked to create and enter a unique identification code which was attached to the data they provided. This identification code ensured their data remained anonymous and allowed them the possibility to withdraw their data before the participation deadline by emailing the code to the researcher.

On the next page, participants were presented with a number of demographic questions regarding their age, gender and current living arrangements (see appendix 5). Once they completed the demographic questions, they were then asked to complete the modified version of the Participant Role Questionnaire (Salmivalli et al. 1996) to measure the level of defending behaviour in bullying situations. Then they were asked to complete the perceived peer and parent normative scale (Pozzoli and Gini, 2012). Once participants had completed the questionnaire, they were then directed to the debrief that thanked the participants for their time, reminded them of the right to withdraw deadline and provided them with the researchers details if they would like a summary of the research results. Once the questionnaire was complete and the data from Qualtrics was received the researcher administered the participation pool credits to the participants.

At the end of the data collection deadline the data was transferred to an SPSS document that only the researcher had access to. The data was first analysed to examine the internal consistency of each questionnaire and then a multiple regression analysis was conducted. When examining the data analysis, the researcher found that the data violated the assumption of normality because the scales for perceived peer pressure and perceived parental pressure were skewed. Therefore the bootstrapping method was applied to resample the data (Field, 2013; see appendix 7).

Results

Reliability Analysis

Once all the data was collected, the scales used to measure defending behaviour, perceived peer pressure and perceived parental pressure were analysed to examine their internal consistency (see appendix 7 for SPSS output). The internal consistency analysis found that the reliability for the defending behaviour scale ($\alpha = .88$) and the perceived parental scale ($\alpha = .72$) was high. The internal consistency for the perceived peer pressure scale was also found to be fairly high ($\alpha = .70$). The scales were equal to or above the recommended Cronbach's alpha level of .70 which indicates high reliability (Cronbach, 1951).

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. The mean and standard deviations for each scale

	<i>M</i> (n = 85)	<i>SD</i> (n =85)
Defending Behaviour	71.60	11.60
Perceived Peer Pressure	12.94	2.40
Perceived Parental Pressure	13.68	2.41

From Table 1 it can be seen that the mean for the defending behaviour scale was 71.60 and the standard deviation was 11.60. The mean for the perceived peer pressure scale was 12.94 and the standard deviation was 2.40. Also the mean for the perceived parental scale was 13.68 and the standard deviation was 2.41.

A Pearson correlation was then performed for each variable (see Table 2). Table 2 shows that there was a strong positive correlation between perceived peer pressure and defending behaviour, $r(83) = .68$, $p < .001$. A strong positive correlation can be seen between perceived parental pressure and defending behaviour, $r(83) = .54$, $p < .001$.

Table 2. Correlations of the study variables

Variable	Parental Pressure	Defending Behaviour
Peer Pressure	.71**	.68**
Parental Pressure		.54**

Note. ** indicates $p < .001$

Regression Analysis

A number of assumptions were tested to make sure the correct method of analysis was used on the data. These assumptions included multicollinearity, absence of outliers, independent errors, homoscedasticity and linearity of data. From this examination it can be seen that, there was no multicollinearity (Peer pressure, Tolerance = .49, VIF = 2.03; Parental pressure, Tolerance = .49, VIF = 2.03). There were also no outliers within the data (Std. Residual Min = -3.09, Std. Residual Max = 1.77). In addition, the assumption of independent errors was also met (Durbin-

Watson = 1.74). Lastly, the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were met as it can be seen from the scatterplot (see Figure 1).

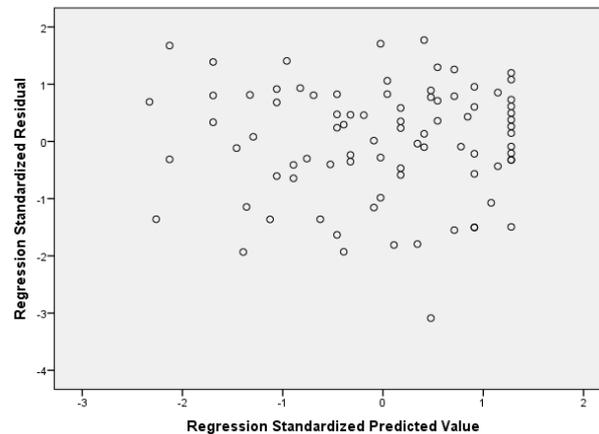


Figure 1. A scatterplot graph to show the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity

When conducting the regression analysis, it was found that the data for the perceived peer pressure scale and perceived parental pressure scale was negatively skewed; this therefore violated the assumption of normality (Field, 2013; see Figure 2 and 3). Consequently the decision was taken to bootstrap the data.

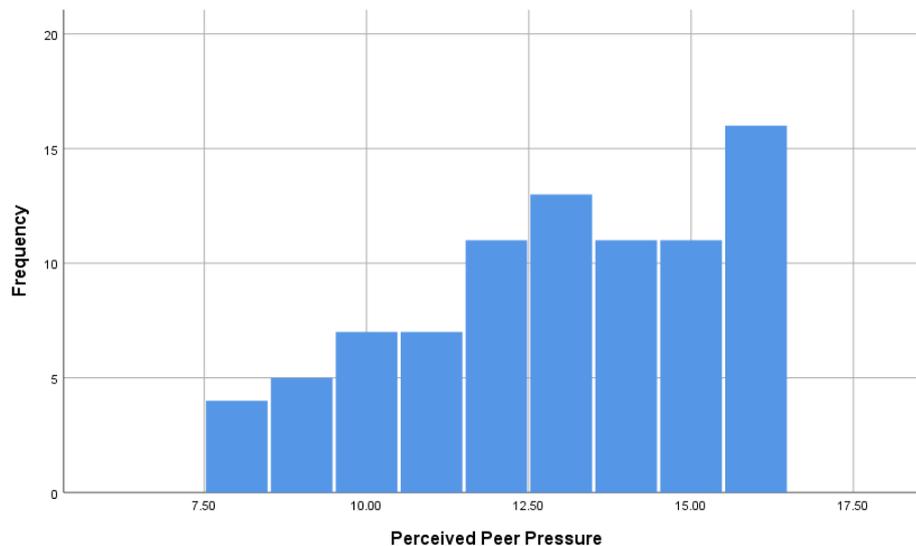


Figure 2. A histogram to show the distribution of scores for perceived peer pressure

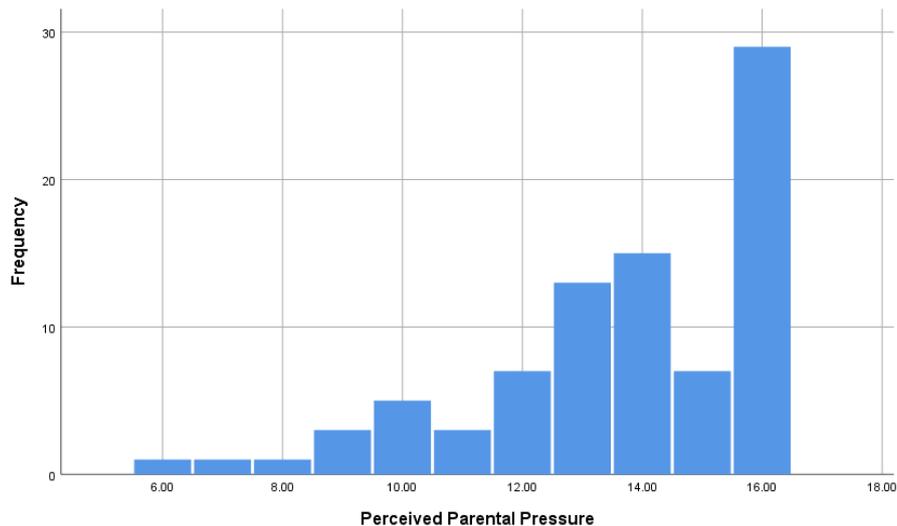


Figure 3. A histogram to show the distribution of scores for perceived parental pressure

The bootstrap indicate that perceived peer pressure $b = 2.92$ [1.84, 3.93], $p = .001$ significantly predicts defending behaviour. However, perceived parental pressure $b = 0.53$, [-0.40, 1.50], $p = .303$ does not predict defending behaviour.

In order to investigate the relationship between perceived peer pressure and perceived parental pressure with defending behaviour within bullying situations amongst university students, a multiple regression was conducted. The 'enter method' was used because there were two predictor variables which were both believed to predict the criterion variable as it has been suggested in the introduction. From the analysis a significant model can be seen, $F(2,82) = 36.33$, $p < .001$. The analysis also shows a strong relationship between the variables ($R = .69$) and the analysis shows that the model can account for 47% ($R^2_{adj} = 45.7\%$) of the variance in defending behaviour scores. Overall, perceived peer pressure significantly predicts defending behaviour, $\beta = .60$, $t(82) = 5.26$, $p < .001$. However, perceived parental pressure does not significantly predict defending behaviour, $\beta = .11$, $t(82) = .96$, $p = .339$. Table 3 shows how each predictor variable relates to the defending behaviour scores within bullying situations.

Table 3. Summary table of regression analysis for predicting defending behaviour scores

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i> (std. Error)	β (beta score)
Constant	26.54	5.93	
Perceived peer pressure	2.92	.52	.60**
Perceived parental pressure	.53	.52	.11

Note. $R^2 = .47$; ** indicates $p < .001$

It can be concluded that, the first hypothesis "perceived peer pressure will significantly predict defending behaviour within bullying situations" was accepted because perceived peer pressure significantly predicted defending behaviour in bullying amongst university students. However, the second hypothesis "Perceived

parental pressure will significantly predict defending behaviour within bullying situations” was rejected because perceived parental pressure was not a significant predictor of defending behaviour in bullying situations amongst students.

Discussion

The findings of the current study suggest that perceived peer pressure significantly predicted defending behaviour however; perceived parental pressure was not a significant predictor of defending behaviour within bullying situations. Thus the first hypothesis, 'perceived peer pressure will significantly predict defending behaviour within bullying situations' can be accepted. However, the second hypothesis, 'perceived parental pressure will significantly predict defending behaviour within bullying situations' can be rejected because perceived parental pressure did not significantly predict defending behaviour amongst university students.

The findings of the current study support the findings of previous studies into perceived social pressures to intervene and defending behaviour, because perceived peer pressure significantly predicted intervention within bullying amongst university students. Perceived peer pressure was also found to positively predict defending behaviour amongst university students, which is in line with the findings of previous studies (Kollerová et al. 2018; Pozzoli and Gini, 2010; Pozzoli et al. 2012; Rigby and Johnson, 2006). This could support the concept that the perceived norms of peers are more influential for university students because individuals spend a great deal of time surrounded by their peers throughout their time at university.

However, the results fail to support the findings reported by Rigby and Johnson (2006) who found that the perceived expectations from parents for intervening within bullying, significantly predicted the defending behaviour of children and young adolescents in these situations. However, the current study suggests that perceived parental pressure is not a significant predictor of intervention within bullying situations amongst university students. A possible explanation for this is that throughout their time at university, students tend to develop independence and may start to distance themselves from their parents. Therefore, university students may have less contact with their parents and the subjective norms of parents may be less influential for these individuals.

Even though the findings of this study suggest that perceived peer pressure was the significant predictor of intentions to defend within bullying, it needs to be considered that bullying is a complex social situation and there are a range of individual and social factors that can influence how individuals behave whilst witnessing bullying (Casey et al; 2017; Lambe et al. 2017). Therefore future research should investigate the relationship of a number of predictors with reported intentions to defend amongst university students. Future research could incorporate the other aspects of the theory of planned behaviour, such as the individual's attitudes towards defending and their perceived control over the behaviour, to see if the theory can significantly predict defending behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). It may also be beneficial for future research to adopt a longitudinal study design in order to establish whether the relationships between, the perceived pressures to intervene from different social figures and the degree of defending behaviour within bullying situations change throughout an individual's time at university.

There are some limitations of the current study; firstly the use of questionnaires meant that some individuals did not complete their responses. Therefore these responses were removed from the data set and this lowered the sample of university students within the study. Future research could consider using a scale with fewer

items on the defending behaviour scale because this scale may have been considered too lengthy for some of the individuals within this study (Arfken and Balon, 2011). In addition, although the questionnaire was useful in measuring the perceived expectations for intervention, the scale measuring the level of defending behaviour could be open to social desirability bias and response bias (Coolican, 2014). However, steps were taken to try and reduce this bias such as informing the participants that their responses would remain anonymous. Also, the combination of the defender and outsider subscale of the PRQ was used to develop the defender behaviour scale within this study. The items on the outsider subscale were reverse scored so that the participants had to think about the responses they were selecting (Salmivalli et al. 1996).

Another limitation of the current study is that the perceived social norms scales only measure the perceptions of expectations to intervene from social figures. As mentioned in the introduction, individuals can make misjudgements of the expectations of relevant social figures, so the perceptions may not truly reflect the actual expectations to intervene within bullying from these social figures (Hymel et al. 2015). Future research could aim to collect responses regarding the actual intervention expectations from relevant social figures of the individuals and investigate the relationship between perceived intervention expectations, actual intervention expectations and bystander behaviour within bullying to examine the influence of possible errors in perceptions of subjective norms.

The findings of the current study could have practical applications for anti-bullying strategies adopted by universities. The findings suggest that perceived expectations from peers are a significant predictor of defending behaviour amongst university students. Therefore, it would be beneficial for universities to implement strategies which could alter the perceived peer pressure of bystanders to not get involved. For example, universities could dedicate time within seminars for their students to discuss and challenge perceptions of defending and bystander behaviour within bullying situations (Bastiaensens et al. 2016).

Overall, the aim of the current study was to see if both perceived peer pressure and perceived parental pressure could predict the level of defending behaviour within bullying situations amongst university students. The proposed hypotheses, based on findings from past research, for this study were “Perceived peer pressure will significantly predict defending behaviour within bullying situations” and “Perceived parental pressure will significantly predict defending behaviour within bullying situations”. Once the data was collected, a multiple regression analysis was conducted with the data. The results show that perceived peer pressure was able to significantly predict defending behaviour in bullying amongst university students, however perceived parental pressure was not a significant predictor of defending behaviour within bullying situations. These findings could contribute some significant ideas to the body of literature surrounding the relationship between perceived peer pressure, perceived parental pressure and defending behaviour within bullying episodes. However, there needs to be more research into the investigation between these variables, especially because bullying is a complex social process which can be influenced by a range of individual and social factors. Any future research conducted within this area could possibly examine the relationship between the aspects of the theory of planned behaviour, to determine if this model contributed significantly to the level of defending behaviour within bullying situations.

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