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Social and emotional learning

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EDITORIAL



Social and emotional learning

The research studies reported in this issue are concerned with the affective and social well-being of students and teachers in school contexts. Understanding positive affects in adolescents should be a major area of concern because of their impact on individuals' health and psychological wellbeing across their lifespan (Kok et al., 2013; Masten & Tellegen, 2012), adaptability (Collie, Holliman, & Martin, 2017), cognitive processes (Fredrickson, & Branigan, 2005) and academic outcomes (Putwain, Loderer, Gallard, & Beaumont, *in press*). In addition, students' and teachers' psychological wellbeing are strongly associated. Teachers not only play a critical role in driving students' affective and social learning, but the status of their own wellbeing also has a strong influence on students' motivation (Shen et al., 2015), school satisfaction (Ramberg, Låftman, Åkerstedt, & Modin, *in press*), physiological stress regulation (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016) and student achievement (Klusmann, Richter, & Lüdtke, 2016). Furthermore, teacher burnout was found to be associated with teacher attrition (McInerney, Korpershoek, Wang, & Morin, 2018).

In this issue, Burić, Slišković and Penezić (2019) used a two-wave panel design to investigate the reciprocal relationships among adverse affective experiences of teachers at their workplace, namely, occupational burnout, psychopathological symptoms and negative emotions associated with students. Furthermore, resilience, or having the buoyancy to recover from stress and strain, was included in the panel design as a protective factor that might mitigate the harmful impact of negative affective experiences. The study found that teachers' burnout at time 1 predicted their burnout, psychopathological symptoms and negative emotions towards students at time 2. Nevertheless, psychopathological symptoms and negative emotions at time 1 were not found to predict teacher burnout at time 2. In addition, stronger resilience predicted lower levels of burnout, psychopathological symptoms and negative emotions when these four variables were concurrently measured at time 1. This is one of the few studies that made use of a panel design, and importantly, this is the first time that resilience, burnout, psychopathological symptoms and negative emotions were included in the same study.

Extensive recent studies have shown that student misbehaviour is a salient stressor associated with teacher burnout, particularly teachers' emotional exhaustion (Aloe, Shisler, Norris, Nickerson, & Rinker, 2014). Perhaps one of the most distressing misbehaviours in the school context is bullying. In this issue, Kubiszewski, Auzoult, Potard and Lheureux (2019) investigated the extent to which three provictim defending behaviours (namely, *alert*: alerting adults of the event; *care*: showing care and attempting to comfort the victim; and *opposition*: opposing or challenging the aggressor) and one *passive* reaction (ignoring or walking away from the scene) of bystanders during school bullying episodes were underpinned by the perceived social norms. Understanding the underpinnings of bystander behaviours is an urgent issue for researchers given the wealth of recent international research findings on the prevalence of school bullying (OECD, 2017; Selkie, Fales, &

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Moreno, 2016), and the pivotal role played by bystanders in changing the school bullying dynamics (Salmivalli, Voeten, & Poskiparta, 2011). In accordance with Cialdini, Reno and Kallgren's (1990) conception of social norms as comprising descriptive (what is commonly done) and injunctive (what should be done) components that shape people's attitudes and behaviours, Kubiszewski et al. (2019) distinguished social norms into descriptive norms, referring to bystanders' beliefs of what most people would do (that is, alert/opposition/care/passive) in incidents of school bullying, and injunctive norms, referring to bystanders' beliefs of what ought to be done in keeping with the expectations of peers and adults in school bullying circumstances. Kubiszewski et al. (2019) found that while all three defending behaviours were perceived as within social norms, passive bystander behaviour was not. Specifically, students perceived defending behaviours of alert and opposition as injunctive; that is, students' perceptions of what others expected them to do and defending behaviours of care were both injunctive and descriptive. In addition, perceived social norms were found to be key predictors of the three defending behaviours and the passive bystander behaviour. These findings highlight the importance of formulating school bullying prevention intervention programmes that raise students' awareness about the normative approval of adults and peers towards such provictim defending actions as reporting to adults, showing care and concern to the victim and challenging bullying behaviours.

Whereas school bullying often co-occurs with poor interpersonal relationships in school, extensive research has documented that students who study at schools with positive affective experiences tend to enjoy better academic outcomes, including stronger academic engagement, higher motivation and better achievement (Wang & Degol, 2016). Nonetheless, much is still unknown about the effect of certain social-emotional factors, such as the school climate and the associations between people's relationships and their math self-concept in the school context. Furthermore, the extent to which the effect is moderated by students' sex has been hardly explored. In this issue, Wong, Konishi and Tao (2019), after controlling for students' sex, used moderated-mediation analysis to examine the relationship between math self-concept and student-teacher relationships and students' sense of school belonging among 15-year-old Canadian students. Their analyses showed two important differences between boys and girls in the way math self-concept is related to their student-teacher relationships and sense of school belonging. First, math self-concept was positively associated with student-teacher relationships among boys and with a sense of school belonging among girls. Second, the indirect effect mediated through the sense of school belonging of student-teacher relationships on math self-concept was only significant for girls. In addition, the total effect of student-teacher relationships and a sense of school belonging on math self-concept was only significant for boys. The study highlighted the importance of taking into consideration students' sex when formulating intervention strategies to raise students' math self-concept.

Park, Park, Choe and Schallert (2019) explored predicting undergraduate students' affective outcomes, namely, students' degree of commitment to a group project, and their positive and negative emotions associated with the group project. Through extensive scale development factor analytic work, Park et al. (2019) identified a significant outperform goal variable; that is, the motivation to outperform either other members in the same group or other groups in the class was a factor at both the individual and group levels. Importantly, this finding extends the current conceptual categorisation of motivation orientation as comprising mastery goals, performance approach and performance avoidance goals. Building on the work of Kim, Kim and Svinicki (2012) on learning outcomes in cooperative group projects, Park et al. (2019) added students' perceived intragroup conflicts in the process of conducting a group project in addition to students' individual and group motivational goals as

predictors. Three models were tested in Park et al.'s (2019) study, using multivariate multiple regression. The first model included three motivational goal variables as predictors at the individual level. They were students' motivation in enhancing knowledge and skills (individual performance goal), desire to demonstrate that they were better than others in their accomplishment (individual outperformance goal) and motivation to learn from the project work (individual learning goal). The next model added three motivational goal variables at the group level as predictors, namely, students' motivation to contribute to the group project (group contribution goal), group outperformance goal and group learning goal. The third model added students' perception of intragroup conflict as a predictor. The results showed that the addition of perceived intragroup conflict substantially increased the variance explained in postgraduate students' project commitment and positive and negative emotions. Given the prevalence of cooperative group projects in students' learning activities across grade levels, this study has addressed the need for a deeper understanding of students' affective and motivational experiences when they engage in group work.

In summary, the research studies in this issue add to the current body of knowledge in the area of students' and teachers' affective and social learning. A range of affective and social constructs were examined, including teacher burnout, school bullying, self-concept and commitment to group projects. These constructs were shown to effectuate or hinder desirable learning outcomes. Notably, the studies reported here were carried out in four educational jurisdictions (Canada, Croatia, France and the United States), and provided primary and secondary data from teachers and students at different ages. Research has shown that different cultures ascribe different values to conformity to social norms, commitment to group work and tolerance of differences, which might affect respondents' interpersonal relationships and subjective wellbeing (Chiu & Chow, 2011; Maitner, Mackie, Pauketat, & Smith, 2017). Given these cross-cultural differences, while readers need to take caution in generalising the findings to other cultures, the studies reported here do provide a strong foundation for extending the research to other cultural settings.

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