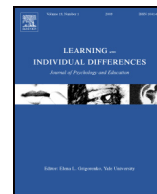




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Emotional intelligence, victimisation, bullying behaviours and attitudes

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence (EI) and pro-victim attitudes play an important role in adolescent bullying and victimisation. We recruited 284 male and female adolescents attending secondary school in Australia. All participants completed the adolescent version of the Swinburne University Emotional Intelligence Test, the Peer Relations Questionnaire and the Revised Pro-victim Scale. Results revealed significant associations between bullying, victimisation, pro-victim attitudes and the EI dimensions. Regression analyses revealed greater Understanding Emotions, lower Emotional Management and Control, being male and having weaker Pro-Victim Attitudes to be significant predictors of engaging in bullying. Investigation of the influence of EI and pro-victim attitudes on victimisation revealed significant independent contributions to the prediction model of victimisation by lesser Emotional Management and Control and stronger Pro-Victim Attitudes. Pro-Social behaviours were predicted by the female gender and greater Understanding Emotions. Results have implications for management and intervention practices of school based adolescent bullying focussed on EI development.

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1. Introduction

Recently research concerning bullying behaviours in adolescents has increased markedly, with a focus on the precursors to bullying behaviours, the types of adolescents more prone to being bullied, and the impact these bullying behaviours have upon the schooling experience and upon future life outcomes. Over 600 peer review articles have been published on bullying between 2000 and 2010 compared to fewer than 190 published in the 20 years prior (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010). In Australia, one in four students has reported being subjected to peer-victimisation on a weekly basis (Cross et al., 2009). This figure is consistent with data from the USA where 13-million students are reported to experience bullying each year (Munsey, 2011). Clearly, school based bullying is a growing global phenomenon which requires urgent attention. As such, whilst the antecedents of bullying behaviour are obviously multi-factorial, one known predictor of bullying behaviour is anti-bullying attitudes and another promising but relatively under-researched with regard to bullying behaviours is the emotional intelligence (EI) of adolescents. Therefore the aim of the current study was to examine the independent contributions of EI to being a bully, or

a victim of bullying type behaviours after controlling for anti-bullying attitudes.

Bullying is generally defined as “repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or groups of persons” (Farrington, 1993; Rigby, 2007). Research in the field of childhood bullying has not only focused on its widespread nature but on the psychological and emotional consequences experienced by those who have been affected by bullying. Studies have shown that repeated bullying in school poses short and long-term health risk, with bullying being associated with increased stress, decreased self-esteem, reduced confidence and increased risk of developing psychiatric problems (Cook et al., 2010; Rigby, 1999, 2005; Smith & Brain, 2000) as some of the negative consequences of long term bullying as both victim and perpetrator.

1.1. The role of emotional intelligence

EI can be defined as “the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, pp. 189). The construct of EI has been linked to a myriad of social and emotional outcomes over the past 20 years of research (Stough, Saklofske, & Parker, 2009). In the context of adolescent development, EI has been suggested to be integral for successful social interaction (Romasz, Kantor, & Elias, 2004), with more highly evolved EI skills

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servicing to enhance emotional awareness, coordinate decision making and improve conflict resolution, and contribute to stable mental health and overall wellbeing (Chow, Chiu, & Wong, 2011; Izard et al., 2001; Schutte, Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Bhullar, & Rooke, 2007). Of interest to this study is the relationship between the abilities encompassed by EI and peer relations at school, in particular whether higher EI scores facilitate pro-social behaviours and prevent anti-social behaviours (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012; Lomas, Stough, Hansen, & Downey, 2012).

The recognition, management and utilisation of emotions has been described as an important component in coordinating social interactions by conveying information regarding others' emotions, thoughts and intentions (Keltner & Haidt, 1999). Recent findings in the field of bullying have shown significant associations between children's emotional responses, social competences and coping (Zimmer-Gembeck, Lees, & Skinner, 2011). Similarly, individuals scoring high on emotion regulation abilities both considered themselves and were deemed by peers to show more pro-social tendencies than their counterparts (Lopes, Salovey, Cote, & Beers, 2005). The examination of the relationship between EI and empathy also points to the probable role that EI abilities could have in moderating adolescents' experience of bullying. The EI dimensions involved in the use of emotions to facilitate positive relationships with others have previously been shown to exhibit significant overlap with empathy; or the ability to comprehend and re-experience the feelings of another (Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoe, 2007; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Specifically, the EI dimensions involving appraisal of emotions in others and accurate perception of thoughts, beliefs and intentions of others are considered key factors in empathic response (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) which is found to be predictive of both bullying behaviours and victimisation (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012).

Further evidence of the role of EI in altering adolescents' emotional experience of bullying could be taken from a study by Zimmer-Gembeck et al. (2011) who assessed the role of emotional reactivity in altering the link between children's social competence and adaptive coping. Bullying was one of the three interpersonal stressors presented to children and findings showed that the relationship between social competence and coping was better explained after consideration of emotional reactions to stressful events (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2011). Whilst emotional expression is one aspect of EI, findings of this kind suggest the potential for emotions to impact on social interactions. Similar findings resulted from work on emotion regulation abilities and quality of social interaction where researchers observed that individuals scoring high on emotion regulation abilities both considered themselves and were deemed by peers to show more pro-social tendencies than their counterparts (Lopes et al., 2005). Downey, Johnston, Hansen, Birney, and Stough (2010) also examined antisocial behaviour as another subtype of social interaction and investigated the link between EI, coping and problem behaviours. Their findings suggested that higher levels of the ability to manage and control emotions were more effective (via the chosen coping strategies) in dealing with stressful situations common in adolescence, and reduced the display of antisocial behaviours. Together these findings suggest that EI as broadly defined as a set of abilities concerned with the regulation, management, control and use of emotions in decision-making, that seem particularly relevant to the promotion of healthy and adaptive mental functioning (Downey et al., 2008) should intuitively play a role in how adolescents experience or engage in bullying behaviours.

A small number of studies have attempted to examine the putative role of EI (or social-emotional competencies) in predicting levels of bullying behaviours and peer victimisation (Gower et al., 2014; Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012; Lomas et al., 2012; Polan, Sieving, & McMorris, 2013). In a small sample (N = 68) of Australian adolescents, the study of Lomas et al. (2012) was designed to assess whether any relationship existed between specific dimensions of EI and engagement in bullying behaviours or being a victim of bullying. This study observed that lower scores on the EI dimensions measuring the utilisation of emotional information in thought/decision-making and managing and

control of emotions significantly predicted the propensity of adolescents to be subjected to peer victimisation, and lower scores on understanding the emotions of others predicted increased bullying behaviours. Similarly, Kokkinos and Kipritsi observed significant relationships between higher EI and lower bullying and victimisation using the Greek translation of the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Adolescent Short-Form (Petrides, Sangareau, Furnham, & Frederickson, 2006) in a larger sample (N = 206), but they only examined a global EI score and did not consider specific EI competencies. More recently in a sample of adolescent girls, Gower et al. (2014) examined the role of specific social-emotional competencies using the Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version and violence perpetration. They observed that deficits in interpersonal understanding/empathy and emotion regulation/management were related to the experience of higher instances of bullying and concluded that these social-emotional based competencies and stress management skills may be protective against the perpetration of relational aggression and physical violence in female adolescents (Gower et al., 2014). The study by Polan et al. (2013) also identified greater interpersonal skills and greater stress management skills to be significantly associated with a lower amount of violence involvement as well as greater stress management also being significantly associated with lower involvement in both physical bullying and relational aggression. Together these four studies point to the importance of the abilities encompassed by EI, as they appear to be inter-related with engagement in bullying, protective of the effects of victimisation and predictive of the engagement in more pro-social behaviour. Our specific interest is in extending these findings by considering the role of attitudes towards bullying behaviours by examining the unique contributions of EI competencies, alongside pro-victim attitudes, to the prediction of bullying and victimisation.

1.2. The role of attitudes towards bullying

Accurate perception of thoughts, beliefs and intentions of others have been considered to be predictive of both bullying behaviours and victimisation (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012). Understanding how attitudes towards these behaviours and their consequences impact adolescents' engagement in bullying or being the target of victimisation is the aim of this paper. Attitudes are suggested to be predictors of spontaneous and deliberate social and non-social behaviour (Goethem, Scholte, & Wiers, 2010), with pro-attitudes towards bullying-type behaviour for example, being associated with increased propensity to engage in bullying of others (Rigby, 2005). The importance of attitudes in sustaining and orienting children's behaviour has also been regarded as an important aspect in both curriculum and policy development (Berger, 2007; Menesini et al., 1997), with students becoming more resistant to the adoption of pro-victim attitudes towards bullying as they progress through school (Hunt, 2007; Menesini et al., 1997; Rigby & Slee, 1991). It is unclear as to why this could be, particularly as it runs counter to the typical development of empathy (Rigby & Slee, 1991), however, these findings may be more interpretable given what we know regarding the relatively permanent nature of attitudes, that they persist across time and situations (Vaughan & Hogg, 2008). In a study involving 210 Swedish and English secondary school pupils, researchers compared student attitudes towards bullying with peer nominations of classmates thought to be bullies and victims (Boulton, Bucci, & Hawker, 1999). Their results reported that pupil anti-bullying attitudes were a significant predictor of lower involvement in bullying. Conversely, those who were most often identified by their peers as bullies held the most accepting attitudes towards bullying. These findings are consistent with research on aggression showing that children who condone the use of aggression are more likely to be aggressive (Huesmann & Guerra, 1997; Tapper & Boulton, 2004). Similarly, two Australian based studies examining bullying related attitudes have reported results showing that self-reported attitudes towards victims made an independent contribution in accounting for reported bullying behaviour

(Rigby, 2005), and that whilst the majority of students opposed bullying and supported victims (Rigby & Slee, 1991), a minority of children (approximately 15 to 20%) expressed attitudes resembling admiration for bullies. The study questioned why some children show pro-victim attitudes whilst others do not, and suggested that effective intervention programmes would benefit from an understanding the role of these attitudes to bullying.

1.3. The current study

There has been very little research into the way in which EI interacts with attitudes, and more specifically, no study has empirically linked adolescent EI with anti-bullying attitudes as yet. Although, given the previously observed relationships between both attitudes towards bullying and EI with both victimisation and bullying (Gower et al., 2014; Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012; Lomas et al., 2012; Polan et al., 2013; Rigby, 2005), it would be reasonable to assume that EI would make independent contributions to the prediction of both bullying and victimisation, over and above the effects of anti-bullying attitudes. Given that specific indices of EI (the understanding and management of one's own and others' emotions) have shown significant overlap with involvement in bullying and victimisation (Lomas et al., 2012; Polan et al., 2013), and that anti-bullying attitudes are predictive of lower involvement in bullying, it might be expected that adolescents develop more anti-bullying attitudes in line with being appreciative of the effects of bullying. These anti-bullying sentiments may occur via greater emotional development, with greater ability to understand and manage theirs and others' emotions informing adolescents of the ramifications of bullying-type behaviours.

As such, our study aims for the first time to examine the relationship between bullying behaviours, victimisation EI, and to assess the contribution of attitudes towards bullying in the potential relationship between EI and self-reported bullying behaviours. It was expected that in line with previous findings (Gower et al., 2014; Lomas et al., 2012; Polan et al., 2013), lower scores on understanding the emotions of others would be related to increased reports of bullying behaviours, and lesser levels of emotional management and control would be significantly related to being subject to peer victimisation and the engagement in bullying. With respect to pro-social behaviours, it was expected that the understanding emotions and emotional management and control dimensions would be positively related to reports of these behaviours. In addition, it was expected that pro-bullying attitudes would be negatively associated with EI, and stronger anti-bullying attitudes would predict less frequent bullying and less frequent victimisation.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 284 young school going adolescents (59 females, 224 males) aged 11–18 years, attending a mixture of single sex private and co-educational government schools in Australia. Approval from the Swinburne University Human Research Ethics Committee was obtained prior to the recruitment of any participants. Parental information statement and consent forms were sent home to parents of student participants either in an email format or in a hard copy via the school. Where school participation was necessary, approval was obtained from the appropriate governing bodies, as well as individual school principals. All students completed the questionnaires as part of a class activity at their school.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Bullying and victimisation

Bullying Behaviours were measured via the Peer Relations Questionnaire (PRQ) (Rigby & Slee, 1993). The PRQ is tailored specifically to

measuring bullying and victimisation in children and adolescents. This scale consists of three subscales: Bully (6 items, "I give soft kids a hard time"), Victim (5 items, "I get picked on by others"), Pro-Social (4 items, "I enjoy helping others"), where participants respond on a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = "never" to 4 = "very often". High scores in the PRQ reflect higher rates of self-reported bullying behaviour and victimisation and authors have reported adequate validity and reliability coefficients which range between $\alpha = .71$ to $\alpha = .86$ (Rigby & Slee, 1993).

2.2.2. Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence was measured using the Adolescent Swinburne University Emotional Intelligence Test (Adolescent SUEIT) (Luebbbers, Downey, & Stough, 2007), a modified version of the SUEIT (Palmer & Stough, 2001). The 57 item trait measure consists of four subscales: Emotional Recognition and Expression (ERE; the ability to identify one's own feeling states and express those to others) of 10 items – "I can tell others how I feel about things", Understanding Emotions (UE; the ability to identify and understand others' emotions), of 19 items – "I can tell how others are feeling", Emotions Direct Cognition (EDC; the use of emotional knowledge in problem solving and decision making) of 10 items – "When I try to solve problems I keep my feelings out of it", and Emotional Management and Control (EMC; the ability to manage positive and negative emotions within oneself and in others including strong emotional states) of 18 items – "I find it hard to think clearly when I am worried about something." Participants respond on a five-point Likert scale from 1 = "very seldom" to 5 = "very often" and high scores in each subscale reflect higher proficiency for that particular subset of emotional intelligence. Researchers have reported high reliability for total EI as well as each subscale where reliability coefficients range from $\alpha = .75$ to $\alpha = .85$ (Luebbbers et al., 2007).

2.2.3. Attitudes to bullying

Attitudes to Bullying were measured via the Shortened Version of Rigby and Slee's (1991) Attitude to Victims Scale (Rigby, 1997). The scale measures the degree to which a person justifies bullying behaviour, supports bullies and their desire to reject children who are victims of bullying based on supposed weakness (Rigby & Slee, 1991). The scale consists of 10 items half of which are positively keyed (Kids who hurt others weaker than themselves should be told off) and half negatively keyed (Kids who get picked on a lot usually deserve it) and participants are required to respond on a three-point Likert scale: Agree, Unsure, Disagree. The Attitude to Victim Scale – Short Version has been found to have good internal reliability with coefficients reported as $\alpha = .81$ for boys and $\alpha = .78$ for girls (Rigby, 1997). High overall scores reflect greater victim support and ultimately stronger anti-bullying attitudes.

3. Results

The mean scores for pro-victim attitudes were slightly lower than previous reports whilst the mean scores for the Adolescent SUEIT appear slightly higher than previously reported scores from similar age groups (Downey et al., 2010). The mean for the victimisation scale appears lower than what was reported in the study of Lomas et al. (2012), whilst the mean for the bullying scale appears consistent with result from the same study. The means, standard deviations and internal reliability for each scale appear in Table 1.

The focus of the study of Lomas et al. (2012) was to document the empirical relationship between the EI dimensions and bullying and victimisation. In addition to the examination of these relationships, we conducted correlation and multiple regression analyses upon bullying, peer victimisation, pro-social (a third sub-scale unexplored in Lomas et al., 2012) EI and pro-victim attitudes. Inter-correlations between the study variables are displayed in Table 1. Given the observed significant overlap between bullying, victimisation and the EI dimensions, in

Table 1
Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations.

	M	SD	α	UEO	ERE	EMC	EDC	Bully	Victim	Pro-social
UEO	70.74	9.94	.75	1.00						
ERE	33.14	5.63	.69	.48**	1.00					
EMC	58.24	10.02	.78	.53**	.43**	1.00				
EDC	29.40	5.26	.71	.10	.24**	-.07	1.00			
Bully	7.34	1.71	.71	-.03	-.14*	-.23**	.02	1.00		
Victim	8.10	2.83	.87	-.11*	-.14*	-.24**	-.12*	.18**	1.00	
Pro-social	13.23	1.96	.69	.36**	.31**	.23**	.22**	-.12*	-.03	1.00
Pro-victim	23.29	7.18	.78	.10	-.01	.19**	-.21**	.00	.28**	-.22**

Notes: UEO = understanding emotions of others; ERE = emotional recognition and expression; EMC = emotional management and control; EDC = emotions direct cognition; M = mean; SD = standard deviation.
* p < .05.
** p < .01.

addition to the additional overlap between the pro-social sub-scale and EI dimensions, as well as the pro-victim attitudes scale, separate standard multiple regression analyses were undertaken to determine the total, shared, and unique amounts of variance in the three bullying measures. Also given that significant differences existed between genders on the reporting of levels of, victimisation (males reported significantly higher levels, $F_{(1, 283)} = 19.46, p < .01$), pro-social behaviour (females reported significantly higher levels, $F_{(1, 283)} = 33.58, p < .01$), pro-victim attitudes (males reported significantly higher levels, $F_{(1, 283)} = 455.18, p < .01$), Emotions Direct Cognition (females reported significantly higher levels, $F_{(1, 283)} = 24.10, p < .01$), and Emotional Management and Control (males reported significantly higher levels, $F_{(1, 283)} = 5.64, p < .05$) gender was included in each of the three regression analyses.

With regard to the regression concerning the level of Bullying engaged in by adolescents', greater Understanding Emotions, lower Emotional Management and Control, weaker Pro-victim Attitudes and the male gender emerged as significant unique predictors of Bullying (see Table 2), and the model predicted 10.7% of the variation in Bullying scores [$F_{(6, 277)} = 5.51, p < .001$]. For the Victimisation sub-scale, stronger Pro-Victim Attitudes and lower Emotional Management and Control significantly and uniquely predicted Victimisation scores (17.2% of the variation), $F_{(6, 277)} = 9.58, p < .001$. For the Pro-social dimension, greater Understanding Emotions scores and female gender emerged as significant unique predictors and the model was found to predict 26% of the variance pro-social behaviours [$F_{(6, 277)} = 16.19, p < .001$].

Table 2
Regression analyses of bullying, victimisation and pro-social outcome measures.

	Beta	t	Significance	Partial correlations
Bullying		9.296	.000	
Emotional recognition & expression	-.088	-1.268	.206	-.076
Understanding emotions	.189	2.638	.009	.157
Emotions direct cognition	.046	.752	.452	.045
Emotional management & control	-.291	-4.083	.000	-.238
Pro-victim attitudes	-.198	-2.114	.035	-.126
gender	-.310	-3.271	.001	-.193
Victimisation		6.330	.000	
Emotional recognition & expression	.006	.084	.933	.005
Understanding emotions	.046	.672	.502	.040
Emotions direct cognition	-.073	-1.239	.216	-.074
Emotional management & control	-.330	-4.809	.000	-.278
Pro-victim attitudes	.256	2.839	.005	.168
Gender	-.080	-.880	.380	-.053
Pro-social		4.057	.000	
Emotional recognition & expression	.095	1.508	.133	.090
Understanding emotions	.246	3.769	.000	.221
Emotions direct cognition	.092	1.644	.101	.098
Emotional management & control	.108	1.668	.096	.100
Pro-victim attitudes	-.028	-.328	.743	-.020
Gender	.279	3.234	.001	.191

4. Discussion

The aim of the current study was to examine the relationship between attitudes towards bullying and EI on outcomes of bullying, victimisation, and pro-social behaviours. With regard to our predictions following on from previous research, the significant relationship between engaging in bullying behaviour and lesser ratings of understanding the emotions of others was not replicated, although as predicted, adolescents involved in the current study reported higher levels bullying behaviour and being a victim of bullying occurring with lesser ability to recognise and express their own emotions appropriately and manage theirs and others' emotions and maintain control over strong emotions. The relationship between pro-social behaviours and the Understanding Emotions and Emotional Management and Control dimensions, revealed higher scores on these dimensions were significantly correlated with higher levels of pro-social behaviours. Another interesting finding worthy of future investigation is the positive manifold of correlations between the Emotional Recognition and Expression and Emotions Direct Cognition dimensions of the EI measure and pro-social behaviours within the assessed adolescents.

With regard to the prediction of levels of victimisation with the EI variables, gender and attitudes towards bullying, the skills involved in management and control of emotions and gender were observed to be independent significant predictors of victimisation after accounting for their shared effects. Greater victim support and thus, stronger anti-bullying attitudes were related to increased levels of victimisation (being bullied), and were a significant predictor in the regression model which was in contrast to our initial predictions. Results further revealed that students who reported greater support for victims were also more skilled in the management and control of emotions. Consistent with research showing victims hold the highest level of sympathy for victims (Eslea & Smith, 2000), a significant association was noted between students with pro-victim attitudes and those likely to experience victimisation by peers. As such, students with first-hand experience of peer victimisation could be the most understanding and sympathetic to the plight of other students in similar roles as victims. Additionally an adolescent's relative inability to manage (maintain positive or deal with negative emotions) and control strong emotions was related to the propensity to being bullied. This may manifest as ineffective reactions to bullying type scenarios with regard to the selection of stress coping strategies in stressful situations common in adolescence that has been previously been found to be related to this EI score (Downey et al., 2010; MacCann, Fogarty, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2011). Another possible explanation for being the focus of bullying, lower scores on Emotional Management and Control may relate to the appearance of being socially anxious, of lesser confidence or social stature as a consequence of poorer social skills that may attract the attention of bullies (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012). Given that previous research has shown that children who are victims of bullying often lack social skills and exhibit lower levels of pro-social behaviour including management of social conflict (Cook et al., 2010), it may follow that

failing to understand how others are feeling results in inappropriate response patterns causing these children to stand out and placing them at a high risk for peer victimisation.

Further considering pro-social behaviour, in the current study, reports of engaging in pro-social behaviour was observed to significantly correlate with each of the four dimensions of EI assessed. Once entered in the regression model, however, only the Understanding Emotions dimension of the EI measure remained as a significant predictor of pro-social behaviour. Higher EI has been previously observed to facilitate pro-social behaviour and prevent antisocial behaviour (Petrides et al., 2006), as well as being linked to a variety of positive life outcomes for adolescents (Stough et al., 2009). In the current sample, students' ability to understand the emotions of others emerged as the only significant predictor of engagement in pro-social behaviours. The saliency of the ability to understand the emotions that others are experiencing in order to act pro-socially towards them is intuitively logical. Whilst the ability to express, use, and manage one's own emotions may be related to acting pro-socially, only being able to understand and consider the emotional state or 'feelings' of others, would allow one to act in a supporting manner. However, the understanding of others' emotions is predicated upon being able to recognise these emotions, and is interlinked with the management, control and usage of this emotional information; as reflected in the inter-correlation between the EI measures, and the overlap between the EI scales and the pro-social behaviour scale. As such, the construct of EI as a whole, certainly plays a role in promoting the types of pro-social behaviours examined by this scale. Females in this study reported higher levels of pro-social behaviours, but no differences between sexes were apparent on the Understanding Emotions dimension of EI. This pattern of results suggests that those adolescents with higher levels of understanding emotions (particularly females) would be more likely to understand the mood or emotional states of their peers, and offer help or support in times of need. In the context of bullying, engagement in pro-social behaviours may manifest through diffusing bullying/victim situations or foreseeing victimisation situations and intervening before any bullying occurs.

Engaging in bullying behaviours was predicted by students' ability to manage and control strong emotions, Understanding Emotions scores, gender and pro-victim attitudes. These two EI predictors of Bullying (Understanding Emotions and Emotional Management and Control), offer two related paths to this result. Greater understanding of the emotions of others may validate adolescents' ability to recognise the impact of bullying behaviours upon their peers, from which they derive some satisfaction. A reduced ability to maintain positive emotions (whether derived from bullying behaviour or otherwise) or reduce the impact of negative emotions upon behaviour may produce actions or behaviours that could be considered bullying. This is consistent with previous research that adolescents with lesser emotional development can feel socially excluded (Lopes, Salovey, & Straus, 2003), act more anti-socially, engage in problematic externalizing behaviours (Downey et al., 2010), some of which would be considered bullying (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012). One explanation for this may be that adolescents who bully others may do so out of a displaced sense of frustration over difficulties in expressing themselves emotionally. Similarly, adolescents who lack skills in regulating extreme emotions may bully others as an externalised behavioural response. This premise is also consistent with research which describes bullies as having a restricted individual locus of control such that bullying becomes a way to regain control by wielding power and control over others (Bansel, Davies, Laws, & Linnell, 2009).

As for the participants' attitudes towards bullying, our predicted negative relationship with Bullying behaviours was partially supported: as no significant relationship existed at the bivariate level, but a significant and negative relationship between these variables was evidenced in the regression analyses. This effect may be due to the significantly higher reporting of pro-victim attitudes by the males in this study, with gender also being a significant predictor of bullying behaviours (no differences were evident at the group level prior to the regression

analyses), with being male predicting significant variation in engagement in bullying. It was expected that across all participants, that greater levels of bullying would coincide with lesser pro-victim attitudes. Previous research concerning the nature and prevalence of bullying has indicated that boys are more likely to be involved in direct bullying and girls in indirect-relational bullying. In the same way, boys may generate more pro-victim attitudes through observance of these direct acts. The context in which bullying occurs, individual or group focused for example, may also alter the degree to which pro-victim attitudes are developed; with males having previously been reported to be more sympathetic towards victims of individual bullying, and females of group bullying (Baldry & Farrington, 1999). As such, examination of the context in which bullying occurs and the types of attitudinal differences that differ between sexes when considering bullying research need to be considered in future study designs.

With the long and short-term impact of bullying behaviours upon both bullies and victims attracting growing attention within schools, as well as the academic literature, understanding of the types of bullying, their impact, and the possible role of EI (and development of EI in structured programmes) as well as other individual constructs in predicting the types of students involved in bullying/victimisation is required. EI development programmes and embedment of socio-emotional education within curriculum may be able to serve to develop prophylactic strategies within adolescents to become more resilient to the adverse effects of bullying behaviour, and become more aware of the possible social and emotional consequences of bullying-type behaviours upon victims. Conversely, if programmes were to focus only upon the understanding of others' emotions, rather than the more complex abilities (management and control of emotions), this may possibly exacerbate bullying behaviour in line with the results of this study.

The examination of adolescents' attitudes towards bullying revealed that the Emotional Management and Control was positively related to pro-victim attitudes as predicted. Interestingly, scores for Emotions Direct Cognition were also significantly and negatively related to attitudes towards bullying, which was not predicted to occur. Previously, the EI dimensions involved in the use of emotions to facilitate positive relationships with others have demonstrated significant associations with empathy or the ability to comprehend and re-experience the feelings of another (Gini et al., 2007; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Specifically, the EI dimensions involving appraisal of emotions in others and accurate perception of thoughts, beliefs and intentions of others are considered key factors in the empathic response (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). As such, adolescents' reduced ability to incorporate emotions into decision-making might therefore reflect a lack of empathy for victims of bullying or understanding of the emotional effects of both bullying behaviours and victimisation (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012). In contrast, adolescents' greater ability to manage theirs and others' emotions may foster the assessed anti-bullying sentiments. Through the greater emotional development encompassed by the ability to maintain positive or reduce the effects of negative emotions, adolescents may be more aware of the ramifications of bullying-type behaviours and the emotions that possibly generate them.

The relationship between pro-victim attitudes and the student's proficiency at managing and using emotions to direct thought possibly reflects the multi-component model of attitudes where the modulation of cognition occurs via emotional processing (Storbeck & Clore, 2007), with greater management and control of emotions and lesser use of emotions in decision-making being related to greater pro-victim attitudes. Interestingly, the more basic EI abilities, Emotional Recognition and Expression and Understanding Emotions, were not found to significantly correlate with anti-bullying attitudes. These findings may hold implications for bullying intervention programme design, as bullying-related attitudes appear to be mostly independent of EI scores and might therefore be expected to affect bullying and victimisation outcomes independently to EI. This is particularly relevant in light of findings which show that whilst EI can be developed through positive

intervention strategies, attitudes towards bullying/victimisation may remain unaffected. For example, Castillo, Salguero, Fernández-Berrocal, and Balluerka (2013) recently demonstrated the efficacy of a 2-year EI development programme that effectively decreased displays of aggression and increased empathy in adolescents but did not address any alterations in adolescents' attitudes towards bullying. As such, adolescents' attitudes towards bullying may need to be targeted additionally in bullying-prevention programmes to alter the perception and prevalence of bullying.

Initially, some differences in the ratings of EI, victimisation and pro-victim attitudes were observed between male and female participants. Male adolescents reported higher levels of victimisation, pro-victim attitudes, and on the Emotional Management and Control dimension of EI, and female adolescents reported higher levels of both engaging in pro-social behaviours and Emotions Direct Cognition. This pattern of results is not surprising given the previous findings in the adolescent EI and bullying areas (Luebbers et al., 2007; Rigby, 2005; Rivers et al., 2012). When considering instituting any anti-bullying or EI development programmes, it would be important to consider these gender differences across adolescence. For example, females' greater reporting of using emotions (Rivers et al., 2012) to facilitate thought which refers to the use of emotion both to focus attention or act more rationally, logically, creatively, and effectively may enhance their ability to deal with potential bullying situations. Whereas, male adolescent's greater ability to manage and control their and other's emotions (Luebbers et al., 2007) could originate from males over-suppressing emotions (a possibly less adaptive reaction to emotional situations), rather than considering their nature and role in social interactions, and this may lead to increased or repeated experiencing of bullying. In the regression analyses, gender appeared as a significant predictor for both pro-social and bullying behaviours, suggesting that the gender differences in predictor and outcome measures influenced the level of perpetration of bullying, as well as the level of pro-social behaviours in this sample. It would also be important in future studies to consider how these gender based differences impact upon the usage of different forms of bullying behaviours (relational, physical, or online bullying), as these differences may impact the degree to which each sex utilises (or suffers from) certain bullying styles; which could be examined via moderation analyses. Using gender as a moderator for the relationships of interest was considered for the current study, but with the unequal subjects in these groups reducing power in regression analyses (Frazier, Tix, & Barron, 2004), it was decided that accounting for the variation in the dependent variable attributable to gender, would provide a more accurate and interpretable account of the results.

A few limitations in the study design that need to be considered include the gender imbalance in our sample; with males being overly represented. Also, as a cross-sectional design study, it is difficult to assign causality with regard to the findings detailed in the current research given this study did rely on self-reported ratings of EI, engagement in bullying behaviours, being a victim of bullying, and on students' attitudes towards bullying-type behaviours. Given the contentious nature of reporting both engaging in and being the victim of bullying, it is possible that the students taking part in the current study may have under-reported the incidence of both experiences. This is possibly reflected in the relatively low reporting of both bullying and victimisation in this sample, and as such, the results should be interpreted with the low incidence of bullying behaviours in this sample in mind. Another limitation of this study is that the questionnaire employed to assess bullying-type behaviours did not distinguish between different types of bullying: relational, physical, or online bullying. Alternate measures could be employed in future studies to assess whether these different types of bullying are independently affected by levels of EI, and attitudes towards specific types of bullying behaviours. Future research could incorporate teacher ratings or observations of bullying type behaviours engaged in by students to identify the relative incidence of reported bullying in comparison to that recounted

by students. A similar recommendation could also be applied for the EI measure, where an 'ability' based measure could be utilised in preference to the self-report measure utilised in the current study.

The results of this study hold implications for the management and reduction of bullying and victimisation in secondary schools. These results reinforce previous school based EI research findings in consistently showing that EI not only has significant associations with bullying and victimisation but is also a significant independent predictor of the propensity for peer victimisation and problematic behaviours (Downey et al., 2010; Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012; Lomas et al., 2012; Mavroveli, Petrides, Sangareau, & Furnham, 2009). It is recommended that programmes which encourage students to develop negative perceptions of bullies and sympathy for victims would benefit from some form of emotion focussed training particularly in teaching students to recognise how the management of positive and negative emotions can affect their behaviour. Finally, this study used the peer relations questionnaire to successfully capture scores relating to bullies and victims. Although these are traditionally the two groups involved in bullying, it would be useful to investigate the influence of EI and bullying related attitudes in bully-victims and bystanders, following the emergence of these two distinct groups as having an indirect involvement in bullying (Cook et al., 2010; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterdan, & Kaukiainen, 1996). As school yard bullying has been known to be perpetuated in many ways, an expansion and refinement of these roles in future research would assist in capturing the many faces of bullying.

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