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Easy Talking With Parents as a Buffer in the Association Between Bullying Victimization and Declining Academic Performance among Foreign-Born and U.S.-Born Adolescents

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Abstract

The present study examines whether easy talking with parents would buffer the association between bullying victimization and declining academic performance among a nationally representative sample of foreign-born and U.S.-born adolescents. The study was drawn from the Health Behavior in School-Aged Children 2009-2010 cohort study in the United States. Analyses include descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and moderated regression analysis for each group (i.e., foreign-born and U.S.-born). Results indicate a significant relationship between bullying victimization and declining academic performance for foreign-born and U.S.-born adolescents. Findings also suggest that easy talking with parents moderated the association between bullying victimization and declining academic performance but for foreign-born adolescents only. The study highlights the importance of family and parental communication to ensure immigrant adolescents' health, well-being, and academic progress. Practice and policy implications and future research directions are discussed.

Keywords Academics · Adolescence · Bullying · Immigrant · Nativity · Parents

Bullying, defined as aggressive behaviors perpetrated by another youth or group of youth, involves unequal power and is repeated (Gladden et al., 2014). Bullying continues to be a serious issue despite the extensive media and scholarly attention,

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which culminated in numerous anti-bullying programs and policies. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 22% of U.S. public school students (aged 12–18) reported being bullied during the 2019 school year. Bullying is especially a concern for adolescents who are perceived as being different, such as being foreign-born (Irwin et al., 2022). According to Maynard et al.'s (2016) study, which included a nationally representative sample of 12,098 youths, foreign-born youth are at a significantly higher risk of being victimized by their peers than U.S.-born youth. Also, Pottie et al.'s (2015) systematic review of research found that first-generation immigrant adolescents (i.e., foreign-born adolescents) experience a higher rate of bullying than their third-generation and native-born peers.

Numerous consequences of bullying victimization, such as mental health problems, psychosomatic maladjustment, substance use, and suicidal behavior, have been documented in the growing body of literature (Arseneault et al., 2010; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; Glassner & Cho, 2018; Moore et al., 2017; Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2014). Not surprisingly, research also shows that victims of bullying tend to underperform academically, be less engaged in school, miss school frequently, and drop out of school (Espelage et al., 2013; Halliday et al., 2021; Laith & Vaillancourt, 2022; Nikolaou, 2022). Low academic performance is a concern for the victims of bullying in general. For foreign-born adolescents, it is a severe concern as educational achievement is perceived as the path to upward mobility in American society, and immigrant parents often emphasize the importance of high academic achievement to their children (Kao et al., 2013).

Identifying protective factors that buffer the linkage between bullying victimization and declining academic performance is crucial. Parental support, conceptualized as “the interactions between a parent and his or her children in the context of participating in, prompting, discussing, and/or providing activity-related opportunities” (Beets et al., 2010, p. 624), is among the most salient protective factors which have been implicated in research on bullying. Studies have shown that perceived support from parents buffered psychosocial consequences of bullying victimization, such as anxiety, self-injury, and suicidal behavior (Claes et al., 2015; Reid et al., 2016). One study also reported the moderating role of parental support in the relationship between bullying victimization and a sense of school belonging among a Taiwanese sample (Han et al., 2021). Another study also found that a high level of parental social support mitigated the negative consequences of bullying victimization on academic performance (Rothon et al., 2011). An attachment theory might illuminate how parental support could buffer the positive link between bullying victimization and declining academic performance. As proposed by Ainsworth (1982), a secure relationship with one or both parents helps children in exploration, discovery, acquisition of skills, and the development of self-confidence. A safe and positive relationship with parents can also contribute to developing high self-worth and self-efficacy in children (Cutrona et al., 1994).

Empirical findings support the proposition that parental support is an essential protective factor for victims of bullying (António & Moleiro, 2015; Biswas et al., 2020; Espelage et al., 2019). However, it is not always clear whether parental support plays a protective role in bullying victimization as children grow older. Bullying tends to occur mainly in the school or virtual spaces outside the purview

of parents. Also, as children transition to adolescence, they undergo a significant transformation as they tend to rely less on their parents and more on their peers and friends as attachment figures (Brown & Larson, 2009) as they develop an autonomous self (Collins & Laursen, 2004). For foreign-born adolescents, however, family plays a crucial role in their adaptation to their host country. These adolescents are in a new and unfamiliar country where family is likely their only source of support. Thus, parents remain essential to foreign-born adolescents even as their native-born peers seek autonomy from their parents when navigating middle and high school. Foreign-born adolescents tend to be more strongly connected to their families as they are motivated by a sense of obligation to their parents (Fuligni, 2006). Foreign-born adolescents typically acculturate faster than their parents and often serve as interpreters for their parents who are limited in communicating in English, which also plays a role in remaining close to their parents (Dorner et al., 2008). Given their strong connection and obligations to their family, communications with parents might matter more for foreign-born adolescents and would buffer the negative association between bullying victimization and academic performances among these youth.

The present study investigates whether easy talking with parents would buffer the association between bullying victimization and declining academic performance among a nationally representative sample of foreign-born and U.S.-born adolescents. We hypothesize that (a) bullying victimization is associated with declining academic performance among foreign-born and U.S.-born adolescents; (b) easy talking with parents would moderate the association between bullying victimization and declining academic performance among foreign-born adolescents only.

Method

Data and Sample

The current study uses data from the Health Behavior in School-Aged Children (HBSC) 2009 to 2010 cohort study in the United States ($n=12,642$). HBSC is a standardized, international World Health Organization study across 43 countries. The current study consists of a nationally-representative sample of students in grades 5 through 10 from 314 participating schools. The schools were public, Catholic, and private school districts in 50 states. Multi-stage sampling was applied to obtain a nationally-representative sample. In the first stage, 94 Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) from within Census Divisions were selected, each containing about ten school districts. Then, 314 school districts were chosen from the PSUs. Finally, sampling classes were chosen from the school districts. If specific grades were selected from these 314 school districts, then classes were chosen randomly, determined by a weighted probability technique to ensure that students were included equally (Cho & Lee, 2018). Among the selected participants, the response rate was 83% for the 2009–2010 U.S. cohort (Iannotti, 2013). Youth assent and active or passive parental consent were obtained depending on the requirements of the participating school districts. For the current study, the sample comprises two groups:

foreign-born adolescents (i.e., Youth who answered “no” to the question, “Were you born in the United States?”) and U.S.-born adolescents (i.e., Youth who answered “yes” to the question, “Were you born in the United States?”). The total sample for this study included 12,092 adolescents of which 1,065 were foreign-born and 11,027 were U.S.-born.

Measures

Declining academic performance consists of one item, which asked, “In your opinion, what does your class teacher(s) think about your school performance compared to your classmates?” Response options were on a four-point Likert-type scale, including *Very good* (1), *Good* (2), *Average* (3), and *Below average* (4).

Bullying victimization included three items derived from the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Solberg & Olweus, 2003). They asked the participants how often they were bullied, including being called names/teased, left out of things, hit/kicked/pushed. Response options were on a five-point Likert-type scale, including *I have not been bullied in this way in the past couple of months* (0), *only once or twice* (1), *2 or 3 times a month* (2), *about once a week* (3), and *several times a week* (4). The items were summed to form a scale (Cronbach’s $\alpha=0.75$), with higher values indicating a greater frequency of bullying victimization.

Easy talking with parents was measured with two items, which began with the question, “How easy is it for you to talk to the following persons about things that really bother you?” and includes options, father and mother. Response options were on a four-point Likert-type scale, including *very easy* (1), *easy* (2), *difficult* (3), and *very difficult* (4). For this study, the response options were reverse coded (Cronbach’s $\alpha=0.69$).

Covariates for the study included *gender* (“Are you a boy or a girl?”; *girl* [0], *boy* [1]), *age* (“How old are you?”; *10 or younger* [1] to *17 or older* [8]), and *perceived family economic status* (“How well off do you think your family is?”; *not at all well off* [0], *not very well off* [1], *average* [2], *quite well off* [3], and *very well off* [4]).

Analytic Plans

The analyses for the current study included descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and moderated regression analysis for each group (foreign-born and U.S.-born). Descriptive statistics were conducted to examine the characteristics of the variables and to describe the samples. Bivariate correlation analyses were used to investigate the relationship among all study variables. To test the hypotheses in this study, moderated regression analysis, which included the covariates (i.e., gender, age, and perceived family economic status) and interaction terms (i.e., bullying victimization and easy talking with parents), was conducted. All analyses were performed using SPSS 21 and PROCESS Macro 4.1 (Hayes, 2022). We examined and visualized the simple slopes to ease the interpretation of the moderating effect.

Results

The descriptive statistics for all variables are presented in Table 1. Regarding foreign-born adolescents ($N=1,065$), the mean age was 13.16 ($SD=1.80$). 47.6% of adolescents were girls, and 52.4% were boys. The average perceived family economic status was 3.60 ($SD=1.01$). The mean scores were 2.02 ($SD=0.85$) for declining academic performance, 4.44 ($SD=2.45$) for bullying victimization, and 5.76 ($SD=1.82$) for easy talking with parents. Among U.S.-born adolescents ($N=11,027$), the mean age was 12.95 ($SD=1.74$) of which 49.0% were girls and 51.0% were boys, and the average perceived family economic status was 3.45 ($SD=0.93$). The mean score for declining academic performance was 2.02 ($SD=0.85$), bullying victimization was 4.30 ($SD=2.28$), and easy talking with parents was 5.75 ($SD=1.71$).

Table 2 displays the bivariate correlations among variables for each foreign-born and U.S.-born group. Concerning declining academic performance for foreign-born adolescents, bullying victimization was positively correlated ($r=0.114$, $p<0.001$), and easy talking with parents was negatively correlated ($r=-0.228$, $p<0.001$). For U.S.-born adolescents, bullying victimization also was positively associated with declining academic performance ($r=0.078$, $p<0.001$), and easy talking with parents was negatively related to declining academic performance ($r=-0.204$, $p<0.001$).

Moderated regression analyses were conducted to address the aforementioned research questions, including the interaction terms. Table 3 presents the results for the associations among the study variables. In the case of the foreign-born adolescent model, the R^2 of the highest-order regression model, which included the interaction term was 0.112 ($p<0.001$). The R^2 change due to the interaction term was significant ($\Delta R^2=0.003$, $p<0.05$). The R^2 of the U.S.-born adolescent model was 0.081 ($p<0.001$), which was the highest order model. However, the R^2 change by the interaction term was not significant.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics ($N=12,092$)

	Foreign-born ($n=1,065$)		U.S.-born ($n=11,027$)	
	N (%)	M (SD)	N (%)	M (SD)
Declining academic performance		2.02 (.854)		2.02 (.845)
Bullying victimization		4.44 (2.45)		4.30 (2.28)
Easy talking with parents		5.76 (1.82)		5.75 (1.71)
Gender				
Girl	507 (47.6%)		5,402 (49.0%)	
Boy	558 (52.4%)		5,625 (51.0%)	
Age		13.16 (1.80)		12.95 (1.74)
Perceived family economic status		3.60 (1.01)		3.45 (.93)

Table 2 Correlations among the study variables

	Foreign-born ($n=1,065$)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Declining academic performance	–					
2. Bullying victimization	.114***	–				
3. Easy talking with parents	-.228***	-.098**	–			
4. Gender (ref. girl)	.174***	-.044	-.211***	–		
5. Age	.098**	.100**	.127***	.017	–	
6. Perceived family economic status	-.224***	-.136***	.277***	-.094**	.027	–
	U.S.-born ($n=11,027$)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Declining academic performance	–					
2. Bullying victimization	.078***	–				
3. Easy talking with parents	-.204***	-.098***	–			
4. Gender (ref. girl)	.137***	-.109***	-.198***	–		
5. Age	.068***	.010	.134***	.043***	–	
6. Perceived family economic status	-.176***	-.063***	.209***	-.084***	.015	–

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3 Easy to talk to parents as a moderator in the association between bullying victimization and declining academic performance

	Foreign-born ($n=1,065$)		U.S.-born ($n=11,027$)	
	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>B</i>	SE
Bullying victimization	.021*	.010	.024***	.004
Easy talking with parents	-.077***	.015	-.081***	.005
Bullying victimization x Easy talking with parents	-.010*	.005	.003	.002
Age	.059***	.014	.047***	.005
Gender (ref. girl)	.196***	.050	.147***	.016
Perceived family economic status	-.135***	.026	-.119***	.009
Constant	1.623***	.213	1.753***	.068
	R^2	ΔR^2	R^2	ΔR^2
R^2 change by the interactions	.112***	.003*	.081***	.000

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$, *** $p < .001$

The relationship among the variables, which included the moderated regression analyses, is as follows. Bullying victimization was positively associated with declining academic performance among foreign-born ($B=0.021$, $p < 0.05$) and U.S.-born ($B=0.024$, $p < 0.001$) adolescents. This finding suggests that a higher level of bullying victimization was positively associated with declining academic performance in both groups. Also, easy talking with parents was negatively and significantly related to declining academic performance among foreign-born ($B=-0.077$, $p < 0.001$) and U.S.-born ($B=-0.081$, $p < 0.001$) adolescents, which indicates that the more the

adolescents talk with their parents, the less they show a decline in academic performance. Regarding the interaction between bullying victimization and easy talking with parents, easy talking with parents was negatively associated with declining academic performance among foreign-born adolescents ($B = -0.010$, $p < 0.05$). However, the interaction term was not significant for U.S.-born adolescents. Thus, moderating effects of easy talking with parents on the association between bullying victimization and declining academic performance were only significant for foreign-born adolescents.

For the covariates, both foreign-born and U.S.-born had a significant association with declining academic performance. Regarding the explained proportion of the variance for the dependent variable in the regression model only including the covariates, the foreign-born adolescent model was $R^2 = 0.084$ ($p < 0.001$), and the U.S.-born adolescent model was $R^2 = 0.050$ ($p < 0.001$). For foreign-born, age was $B = 0.059$ ($p < 0.001$), gender was $B = 0.196$ ($p < 0.001$), and perceived family economic status was $B = -0.135$ ($p < 0.001$). For U.S.-born; age was $B = 0.047$ ($p < 0.001$), gender was $B = 0.147$ ($p < 0.001$), and perceived family economic status was $B = -0.119$ ($p < 0.001$).

To ease the interpretation of moderating effects of easy talking with parents on the association between bullying victimization and declining academic performance for foreign-born adolescents, we examined a simple slope for moderating effects. Figure 1 visualizes the simple slope, which is the conditional effect of bullying victimization on declining academic performance, according to the level of easy talking with parents. Comparing the simple slope according to easy talking with parents with high (+1SD), mean, and low (-1SD) levels, the slope is steeper when easy talking with parents is low. When easy talking with parents is high level (+1SD), as bullying victimization increases, there is little change in declining academic performance. When the level of easy talking with parents is within the mean, the conditional effect of bullying victimization on declining academic performance is reduced

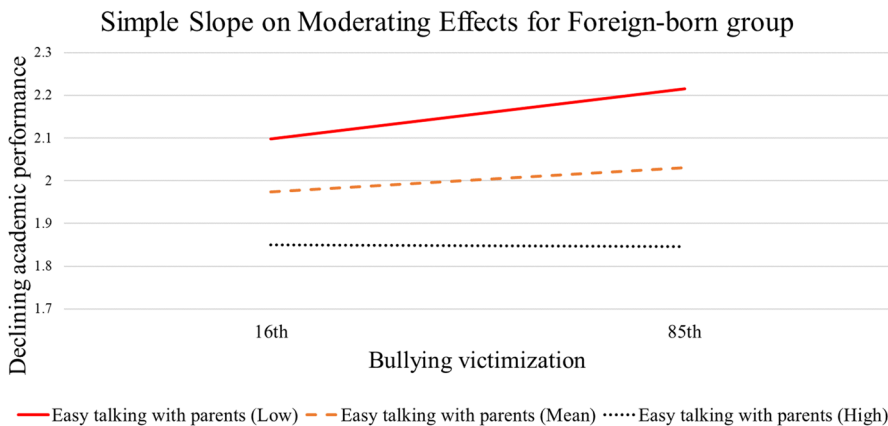


Fig. 1 Simple slope on the moderating effects of easy talking with parents on bullying victimization and declining academic performance for foreign-born adolescents

compared to when the level of easy talking with parents is low (-1SD). Thus, for the foreign-born group, easy talking with parents buffered the conditional effect of bullying victimization on declining academic performance.

Discussion

The current study aimed to explore whether bullying victimization would be associated with declining academic performance among foreign-born and U.S.-born adolescents. Numerous scholarly findings have verified a strong connection between bullying victimization and intellectual functioning (see Espelage et al., 2013); to our knowledge, this is one of few studies that examined whether this association is similar for both foreign-born and U.S.-born adolescents. This study is critical as American school districts have students from an immigrant background, and the proportion of foreign-born students in U.S. classrooms is expected to rise to 33% within 20 years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). As the proportion of foreign-born students in U.S. schools has increased, bullying victimization of these students has become a growing concern for parents, teachers, and schools (Peguero, 2012).

Our study found a significant relationship between bullying victimization and declining academic performance for both foreign-born and U.S.-born adolescents, which was consistent with our hypothesis and prior study findings (Espelage et al., 2013; Halliday et al., 2021; Laith & Vaillancourt, 2022; Nikolaou, 2022). A significant direct association between bullying victimization and academic performance has been found in studies that use school outcome indicators that focus on students' feelings or attitudes about school. The current study utilized teachers' perceptions of students' academic performances, showing a strong direct association between victimization and academic performance (Jenkins & Demaray, 2015), regardless of adolescents' nativity. Further, repeated victimizations are likely to adversely affect adolescents' intellectual functioning in the classroom as they tend to exhibit depressive symptoms and anxiety, have difficulty concentrating on their studies, and feel disconnected from school.

The study also explored whether easy talking with parents would buffer the relationship between bullying victimization and declining academic performance. Our findings indicated that easy talking with parents was negatively associated with declining academic performance for both foreign-born and U.S.-born adolescents. However, the results suggest that easy talking with parents did not buffer the association between bullying victimization and declining academic performance for the U.S.-born adolescents' group, which was in line with our proposed hypothesis. For U.S.-born adolescents, perceived ease of talking with parents might not protect them from adverse outcomes when they are victims of bullying, such as declining academic performance. Adolescence is a developmental period in which youth seek independence from their parents and increasingly depend on peers for social support (Fulgini & Eccles, 1993). In Western societies, such as the United States, adolescents are strongly encouraged to strive for autonomy (Lee et al., 2010), which might explain why for U.S.-born victims of bullying, perceived ease of talking with parents may not be a protective buffer.

Unlike U.S.-born adolescents, however, family members (e.g., parents) are likely the only source of social support and social network for foreign-born adolescents, especially those who recently arrived in the United States. Thus, it was not surprising that easy talking with parents moderated the association between bullying victimization and declining academic performance for foreign-born adolescents only in our study. Feeling easy to talk with parents may give foreign-born adolescents a sense of security, which would motivate them to strive for excellence in school even as they encounter challenges, such as bullying victimization. Also, parents of foreign-born adolescents are likely to stress the importance of academic performance repeatedly (Fuligni, 1997), which they may perceive as crucial for higher education and occupational success. For many immigrant and foreign-born parents, especially from Asian countries, parental expectations of children's educational success are high (Goyette & Xie, 1999). Educational aspirations for children tend to be among the most significant factors for foreign-born families to immigrate to the United States (Hagelskamp et al., 2010). Further, for foreign-born adolescents who come from familist or collectivist backgrounds, those who perceive their parents as available and supportive are inclined to work hard and excel academically. Despite the setbacks in school (e.g., bullying victimization), for foreign-born adolescents from a family-oriented culture, academic success is perceived as an obligation to the family. Considering that parents play an essential role, the ability to communicate with parents can be an essential protective factor for foreign-born adolescents in that it could help them develop healthy coping strategies to deal with bullying victimization.

And finally, the present study found that the covariates, such as gender, age, and perceived family economic status, are significantly associated with declining academic performance for both foreign-born and U.S.-born groups. Male adolescents may be more inclined to show a declining academic performance than female adolescents, which is expected as males tend to be diagnosed with learning disabilities more frequently and score lower in reading than females (e.g., Buchmann et al., 2008; Görker, 2019). Moreover, as indicated in our findings, older adolescents are more likely to show declining academic performance than their younger counterparts. As youth age, especially when they transition to middle school or high school, they are inclined to feel less motivated and make less effort into their studies (Midgley & Urdan, 1992), which contributes to declining academic performance. Also expected, lower family economic status was related to declining academic performance in our study, which is consistent with findings that show a correlation between family income or SES and students' academic performance (e.g., Liu & Lu, 2008). Students' academic performances tend to improve when socioeconomic resources are available.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

This study is not without any limitations. The study controlled for gender, socioeconomic status, and age. However, other potentially relevant covariates were not available in the dataset. That includes the length of time spent in the United States, country of origin, or English proficiency, although they may influence the

relationship between bullying victimization and declining academic performance among foreign-born adolescents. Important information about U.S.-born and foreign-born adolescents is missing, such as country of origin. As a result, we could not explore the cultural variations from country to country, which is essential for interpreting the results. Additional research is needed to examine whether these factors shape this relationship and the protective role of parent-adolescent communication. Future studies especially need to consider the country of origin for both U.S.-born and foreign-born adolescents.

Our study is also cross-sectional; thus, causality cannot be inferred. Although substantial evidence indicates bullying victimization often precedes academic decline (Espelage et al., 2013; Halliday et al., 2021), academic decline can also increase adolescents' risk of bullying victimization. Replication of the current analysis within longitudinal designs is needed to ascertain chronological ordering.

The current study further relies on adolescents' self-reports, which may be subject to social desirability, common source biases, and shared method error. The self-reports used in the study also limited the causal interpretation of the study results. Future studies can mitigate these limitations by triangulating data from parents, teachers, and counseling professionals working with adolescents.

Another limitation is related to the measures of declining academic performance derived from the perceived teacher's evaluation of their student's academic performance. Also, "declining" might involve comparing performance over time, which requires a longitudinal study design. Similarly, the measure for the easy talking with parents variable is limited in that adolescents might find it easy to talk to their parents about school life but not about other issues, such as dating and sex.

The current study consisted of a sample of foreign-born ($n = 1,065$) and U.S.-born adolescents ($n = 11,027$) despite the variations in the sample size of each group. However, it is essential to mention that prior studies have compared the two groups despite the variations in the sample size (e.g., Maynard et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the variations in the sample size between the two groups need to be considered in future studies.

Moreover, the data used for this study are dated, which represents another study limitation. However, adolescent bullying continues to be a significant concern in U.S. public school districts. An earlier report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics indicated that during the 2009–2010 school year, 23% of public schools reported that bullying occurred among students (Robers et al., 2012). According to the most recent report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, during the 2019–2020 school year, 22% of students reported bullying victimization (Irwin et al., 2022).

Finally, our study relies on a single-item measure for the academic decline derived from students' perceptions of their teacher's view of their academic performance. While single-item measures reduce respondent fatigue, particularly in representative designs such as the HBSC, future research is needed to determine the extent to which this item exhibits adequate psychometric properties. Also, it is essential to consider exploring students' academic performance using more objective measures such as GPAs and test scores.

Limitations notwithstanding, our study underscores the protective role of parent-adolescent communication and highlights several avenues for future inquiry. Given that foreign-born students may experience bullying tied to their racial identity, cultural orientation, or English proficiency, future research should examine the extent to which parent-adolescent communication effectively protects adolescents from these forms of bullying. Similarly, future studies may consider the protective role of contact with siblings and social support from extended family members (e.g., grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins). Foreign-born adolescents may identify more readily with siblings who have firsthand experience attending school in a new country. Also, extended family members may serve a protective role. Consequently, positive communication with siblings and social support from extended family members may protect foreign-born adolescents from the harmful effects of bullying. Finally, while the present study does not find that U.S.-born students experience the same benefit of parent-adolescent communication, future studies may find this relationship differs by immigrant generational status. Second-generation students (students born in the U.S. to foreign-born parents) often exhibit a certain degree of biculturalism or identification with the cultures of both their family's home and host countries (Marks et al., 2011; Padilla, 2006). Second-generation students from familist or collectivist cultural backgrounds may be more likely to benefit from positive communication with parents and other family members than their peers from more individualist cultural orientations.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Findings from the current study also have implications for practice and policy. For victims of bullying who show signs of declining academic performance, practitioners need to consider working closely with the teachers to monitor their academic performances carefully and to consider a program that provides efficacy in reducing bullying. One such program is social-emotional learning (SEL), which addresses a core set of social and emotional skills, including empathy and communication (Espelage et al., 2013). SEL has been shown to increase academic competence and social skills (Durlak et al., 2011; Espelage et al., 2016).

The current study results suggest that perceived ease of talking with parents still play a critical role in adolescents' academic success even when experiencing school challenges, such as bullying victimization. According to the American Immigration Council (2021), the top countries of origin for immigrants in the United States are Asian and Latin American countries, such as Mexico (24% of immigrants), India (6%), China (5%), the Philippines (4.5%), and El Salvador (3%), which are characterized as collectivist or familist-oriented. Therefore, positive communication with family members would play a significant role in the lives of foreign-born adolescents from these countries. Practitioners, such as school social workers, counselors, and psychologists working with foreign-born students, should assess cultural dynamics within their clients' families and help clients celebrate the resilience of their intrafamilial relationships. Moreover, given the importance of parents for foreign-born adolescents, it would seem ideal for the practitioner to involve parents in the intervention efforts. However, involving parents of foreign-born adolescents in intervention

efforts is likely challenging due to language and cultural barriers and a lack of familiarity with the school system in the United States. Therefore, parents of foreign-born adolescents should be provided with resources to help support their children, such as information in their native language about bullying and how they can be involved.

Importantly, ensuring that immigrant families have equitable access to resources needed to navigate bullying is critical. Beyond translating materials into various languages, efforts that help immigrant parents understand why bullying might occur and its potentially harmful effects are a crucial first step in ensuring families can support their adolescent children when they are victimized in school. Moreover, school practitioners aiming to create a safe school environment for foreign-born adolescents must consider intervention programs that promote positive youth development and reduce bullying behaviors in students, such as the SEL program. As previously mentioned, SEL practices assist the participants in developing skills such as emotion regulation, perspective-taking, interpersonal relationship problems, and problem-solving (Fredrick et al., 2022). SEL has been documented to lower the incidence of bullying among its participants (Durlak et al., 2011; Espelage et al., 2013, 2014, 2015; Frey et al., 2009).

The most important mechanism for addressing students' declining academic performance is linked to their bullying victimization experiences. Educators and school staff have a critical role in this regard, as they spend significant time with students. However, educators and school staff express feeling ill-prepared to respond to school bullying (Migliaccio, 2014) even though they have expressed interest and a need for additional training (Bauman & Del Rio, 2005; Kennedy et al., 2012) in bullying prevention. Hence, teachers need to be adequately trained to address bullying among students in school.

Lastly, school practitioners need to be adequately trained to provide culturally relevant and feasible services when working with racial/ethnic minority and foreign-born students who are victims of bullying and struggling academically. Culturally relevant services are especially important as anti-bullying programs in the past have not shown to be as effective in racially diverse school settings as they were for racially homogenous schools (see, e.g., Bauer et al., 2007; Evans et al., 2014).

Conclusion

In summary, our study makes a significant contribution to the research on immigrant adolescents and their safety, health, and well-being by investigating and revealing the importance of family, specifically parental communication, which can buffer the detrimental consequences of bullying victimization. It is also clear, however, that immigrant families face many challenges and barriers that may restrict immigrant parents' ability to sustain open communication and maintain strong bonds with their children. Researchers have highlighted that immigrant parents often have multiple jobs, are under-resourced, reside in disadvantaged communities, have limited contact and communication with schoolteachers and administrators, and restricted access to social and health services (Peguro & Bondy, 2021). Thus, enabling immigrant parents and improving and increasing the resources to support open communication and healthy relationships are paramount, especially considering the abundant evidence that foreign-born adolescents are vulnerable to bullying victimization and harassment as well as educational barriers and

obstacles (Peguero & Bondy, 2021). Fueled by these results and the broader research about the marginalization of immigrant adolescents, we encourage future research to further expand our understanding of safety, health and well-being, academic progress, and educational attainment for this growing and vulnerable segment of the adolescent population.

Data Availability The dataset used for this study is publicly available.

Declarations

Ethics There were no ethical issues concerning human participants/animals in the study.

Informed Consent Informed consent was not required for this study.

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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