



## **Moral Disengagement: A Framework for Understanding Bullying Among Adolescents**

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**KEYWORDS** Bullying; victimization; adolescents; moral disengagement; attitudes and beliefs

**ABSTRACT** The present study examined whether the construct of moral disengagement (Bandura, 1999, 2002; Bandura, 2001) contributes to our understanding of bullying among adolescents. Canadian students in grades 8-10 ( $N = 494$ ) completed questionnaires about their experiences with bullying and victimization and their attitudes about bullying. Eighteen items were identified (post hoc) as reflecting major categories of moral disengagement. Results indicated high levels of frequent victimization and bullying (i.e., 12% and 13% of students, respectively). Reported positive attitudes and beliefs about bullying were significantly more likely among students who engaged in bullying, with 38% of the variance in reported bullying accounted for by the students' endorsement of strategies for moral disengagement. Interestingly, reported experiences of victimization were also related to moral disengagement, but only for those students who reported moderate levels of bullying. Discussion focuses on the implications of these findings for school-based interventions.

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**Peer Victimization in Schools: An International Perspective**

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