

## Sexual prejudice, inter-group contact and homophobic school climate as determinants of school staff responses to homophobic bullying

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Bullying and homophobic bullying are a widespread problem in the European and North-American school context [1,2]. Despite the relevant role played by teachers regarding bullying within the school context as well as in influencing student reactions to the bully, the majority of research on this theme has mainly addressed student attitudes and behaviors from the perspective of the victim, actor and bystanders, for a review see [3], leaving the teachers' attitudes towards and reactions to bullying episodes partially unexplored [4, 5]. Importantly, the underrepresentation of research addressing the way teachers appraise and react to bullying is even more pronounced when *homophobic* bullying is taken into account.

The present research intends to fulfill this lacuna. We assess the frequency and types of staff reactions towards homophobic bullying within the secondary school context, thus understanding how the staff appraises and deals with homophobic bullying events [6]. Furthermore, and for the first time, the present work aims to assess the contribution of attitudinal factors, such as the staff's sexual prejudice and contact with homosexuals, in shaping both the type and the frequency of staff reactions to homophobic bullying. Moreover, the role of contextual factors, namely the perceived staff responses to, as well as the occurrence of homophobic bullying in the school context will be analyzed as potential predictors of the staff's own reactions towards these bullying episodes.

Results have indicated that the higher the sexual prejudice and the lower the contact with homosexuals, the higher the frequency of reactions compatible with not-contrasting interventions. Moreover, the staff reactions to homophobic bullying are strongly shaped by the perceived reactions of colleagues to the same episodes. Finally, the higher the frequency of observed bullying episodes, the higher the staff tendency to defend the bullying actors. Results are discussed with respect to the current literature regarding this phenomenon, and applied interventions to face homophobic bullying at school are put forward.

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