

## Bullying

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**Abstract:** Bullying is an issue that has been affecting many in the world today. It takes place in many forms some of which are direct and include physical harm on the victim. Verbal bullying involves name calling and insults or threats being directed at the victim and may also involve emotional bullying where the victim's emotions are targeted by the bully. Other forms of bullying may be indirect where the harm is not caused by the person directly but it still ends up affecting the person. Bullying is a serious problem that is affecting the academic and social lives of the school going children. In order to understand the problem and develop an intervention plan that can be used to stop it, it is important to identify the various forms of bullying that are going on within the schools and the trends they are taking. It is also important to understand how they have carried out and the effects that arise from the practice. This will help develop a plan that will be able to establish a safe and secure environment in the schools for all children.

**Keywords:** bullying; children; school; consequences; behavior

**Bullying** in schools has become very common and it has led to some very serious consequences. It has led to physical violence in forms of fight and in some extreme cases deaths by suicides. The two most common forms of bullying were reported to be teasing and hitting/kicking. Fewer of the younger group than the older group reported being bullied by same age pupils, and more of the former reported being bullied by older pupils. Most boys were bullied by other boys only, whereas girls were more likely to be bullied by children of either sex. Besides being bullied in school, children also reported that this happened on the journey to/from school and in other places such as in the street near where they live.

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Cases have emerged of some forms of bullying in the schools that have led to some of these severe consequences.

Children who are victims have had to live with short term and long term consequences of the behavior. Some of the other effects include poor performance in their studies, depression, bedwetting, being withdrawn, changing schools regularly and in some cases suicides among others (Norfolk, n.d). Over 7% of children especially in the 8th grade tend to stay at home once a month since they are bullied in schools (Banks, 1997). Reports have also shown that about 15% of students are bullied on a regular basis with some being initiated into the bullying practice. Direct bullying is more common among boys than with the girls. However, physical abuse in boys tends to reduce as they progress in age. The victims of bullying sometimes carry these effects such as depression and low self-esteem into their adulthood.

### **Historical Overview**

Bullying in schools has been ongoing for a long time now and is experienced in very many areas of the school. It occurs in some specific areas in the school compound and environment which include the School Bus Park, hallways and bathrooms and even during recess (Banks, 1997). It normally consists of a group of bullies who like isolating a student and bullying them by teasing and taunting the student. Some of them pressure the student to perform various tasks that humiliate the student. Teachers and school administrators have also been known to perpetrate bullying in the schools. They target a particular student and humiliate or abuse the student aggressively.

The causes of bullying arise from the social setting of the bullies. The bullies usually get the trait from the family setting or from experiences from home. Studies have shown that most bullies emerge from families that experience physical forms of punishment and where the families are undergoing some form of abuse. School bullies tend to lack warmth from their parents and they then strike back through bullying other children in order to handle their problems.

They may also acquire the behavior by learning it from friends and peers (Banks, 1997). There are several characteristics that bullies have in common especially in the schools. Most of the students who feel the need to bully others are usually looking to gain control since they normally feel more powerful than their intended victims.

They tend to get satisfied once they see their victims suffering and they do not feel empathetic at all towards the victims (Staffordshire, n.d). Most bullies usually have high self-esteem and they rarely perform the bullying act since they feel bad for themselves. They are however antisocial, defiant and badly behaved. They tend to break rules and display a lot of arrogance and opposition in schools.

Victims of bullies, on the other hand, are usually very insecure, cautious and they suffer from low self-esteem (Olweus, n.d). They rarely confront the bullies to defend themselves. They are insecure and anxious and may lack social skills needed to make friends. They tend to come from families where their parents are overprotective. The major characteristic that is found with victims of bullying is that they are weaker than the bullies and this makes it difficult for them to fight the bullies back.

#### *Literature Review*

Several studies have been done with regard to bullying but the main points highlighted include the effects that come with bullying. (Norfolk) puts it that children who are victims end up performing poorly in school, being depressed and some may even commit suicide. To back up this argument Banks (1997) points out that more than 7% of children in the 8th grade tend to stay at home once a month due to being bullied in school. On the same note, (Staffordshire) depicts that it is more satisfying for the bullies to see their victims suffer. Further research indicates that victims of bullies are usually very insecure (Olweus), similarly, Wright adds to the bargain by pointing out that the victims tend to have very low self-esteem (2003). Moreover, Digizen brings in a new perspective to the issues by incorporating the environment into the technological world creating anxiety among the children where children use the same for purposes of bullying.

#### *Evolution of Bullying*

Bullying behavior has been continuously changing over the years. Different forms of bullying have emerged and they continue to develop and be used in the schools. Technology has played a very big role in the evolution of the behavior. The first forms of bullying that have existed over the years included both direct and indirect methods that were used in the practice. The methods continue to be in use until today but have been evolved by the use of technology.

Name calling was one of the types of bullying that were used by the bullies on the victims (Staffordshire, n.d). The victims were given certain names that were intended to humiliate them and lower their self-esteem. The method has since evolved and is

in use in more places rather than just in schools. Physical bullying has also evolved from the physical injuries that were inflicted on the victims and it has included theft as a method that is used to involve threats and lead to the violence.

Social isolation that was once used to make the victims stay alone without friends and was experienced by children of all age groups has evolved to also include homophobic isolation. Homophobic isolation is the type of isolation that is practiced by the bullies on the children who are termed as gay or they are seen to be gay (Staffordshire, n.d). It also includes those seen to be bisexual or they portray characteristics that make them seem to be associated with the opposite sex. It is being practiced in the secondary schools and higher levels of education. The method is normally spread through the social websites through gossip and in other websites.

One form of bullying that has emerged in schools involves the abuse that is directed at children who are of different races and cultures. This form of bullying has been growing over the years with cases being reported that show the increase. The cases also show that the bullying is also changing according to the different age groups. 25% of children of age 8 were seen to be bullied more compared to the children who were 5 years who only made 20% of the overall cases in that age group (Staffordshire, n.d).

#### *Role of Teachers and School Administrators*

Teachers and school administrators have a role to play in preventing bullying in the schools and making the schools a safe haven free from any bullying activities. They should first be aware of the existence of the problem so that they can develop measures to intervene. The teachers can help detect the existence of the practice and encourage the victims of bystanders to speak out. The interventions that are developed should be able to include the whole school and not intimidate the bullies or the victims either (Olweus, n.d).

Teachers and the school administrators can also help identify the areas that are used by the bullies to attack the victims since they mostly do so in private and hidden areas. They should, therefore, eliminate the existence of such areas within the school's compound. They can also involve the students to develop rules within the classrooms that are against the behavior. To increase awareness of the problem to the parents, the school administrators should develop parent teacher days to make the parents aware of the problem's existence and the importance of the parents to get involved in the whole process (Sampson, 2002).

### *Stopping Bullying in Schools*

It is sometimes difficult to understand how schools can provide the environment for bullying to take place yet they are very well supervised. Bullying, however, is carried out secretly and in hidden areas and adults including parents and teachers are not able to notice when it is going on. Other reasons that make it hard to detect is the fact that the school staff may see it as harmless play and therefore decide not to intervene. There may also be the lack of enough supervisory settings that could lead to detecting the behavior in its likely occurrences (Wright, 2003).

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