



BULLYING AND ITS IMPACT ON SELF-ESTEEM OF ADOLESCENTS AND COPING STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Adolescents' coping mechanisms, self-esteem, and connection with bullying are all intricately intertwined and complicated. Bullying can have a significant impact on the self-esteem of adolescents resulting in emotions of inadequacy, worthlessness, and social isolation. The present study aims to understand the impact of Bullying on Self-esteem of Adolescents and Coping Strategies employed by them. For this purpose, a sample of 120 adolescents aged 13-19 years was selected. Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale (MPVS), Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (RSES) and Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences (A-COPE) were utilized as research tools. The SPSS statistics that were used for analysing the data of the sample were Independent Sample t-test and Pearson's Correlation. The results showed that levels of bullying and self-esteem will be negatively correlated. Another major finding was that gender differences (male and female) were significant on bullying and self-esteem scales. Males were more prone to peer victimization whereas women were comparatively higher in self-esteem in bullying situations. It was also found that coping strategies and self-esteem were positively correlated.

Keywords: Bullying, Self-Esteem, Coping Strategies, Adolescents

I. INTRODUCTION

Bullying

Bullying can have a significant impact on the self-esteem of adolescents. Adolescents who are bullied may feel inferior, helpless, and powerless, which can negatively affect their self-esteem and self-worth. The impact of bullying on self-esteem can be particularly severe during adolescence, a period in which social acceptance and peer approval are particularly important. Studies have shown that bullying can lead to a variety of negative outcomes, including depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Bullying can have a significant impact on the

self-esteem of adolescents, and it is important to provide them with effective coping strategies to deal with the negative effects of bullying.

Bullying is a form of deliberately repeated aggressive behavior that involves a power imbalance between the bully and the victim. In psychological terms, bullying is often described as a pattern of behavior that involves a person (the bully) using their social or physical power to harm, intimidate, or dominate another person (the victim).

Bullying may severely impair a person's sense of self-worth, leaving them with feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness. On the other hand, since they lack self-assurance and aggressiveness, those with low self-esteem could be more prone to bullying. This link emphasises the harmful loop that may develop between bullying and low self-esteem, highlighting the need of addressing both issues in support networks and solutions.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is a psychological term that alludes to an individual's by and large sense of worth or esteem. It is the subjective assessment of one's own worth, based on how one sees oneself and the input one gets from others.

Types of self-esteem:

In psychology, there are two types of self-esteem: high self-esteem and low self-esteem.

- **High self-esteem:** High self-esteem alludes to a positive and healthy sense of self-worth. Positive self-image and self-esteem are characteristics of those with high self-esteem. They are certain in their capabilities, have a strong sense of self-worth, and are more likely to take risks and seek after their objectives. Individuals with high self-esteem tend to be more flexible when confronted with challenges and are way better prepared to handle stress and setbacks.
- **Low self-esteem:** Low self-esteem, on the other hand, alludes to a negative and unhealthy sense of self-worth. People with low self-esteem frequently have a poor self-image and are self-conscious. They may feel lacking, inferior, or unworthy, and may battle with self-doubt and negative self-talk. Individuals with low self-esteem may dodge challenges and opportunities for fear of disappointment and may struggle to create positive connections with others.

Given the significant impact of bullying on self-esteem, it is critical to investigate appropriate coping techniques that adolescents might use to navigate such difficult situations. Coping methods are crucial skills for adolescents to use in dealing with the emotional and psychological toll of bullying, allowing them to recover control and resilience.

Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are fundamental in managing the negative impacts of bullying. Bullying can lead to feelings of isolation, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and even self-destructive thoughts. Subsequently, successful coping strategies can help people to better manage the negative impacts of bullying and decrease the hazard of long-term mental well-being issues.

Relationship between Bullying, Self-Esteem, and Coping Strategies

Bullying and Self-Esteem: Bullying may negatively affect someone's sense of self. A person may experience emotions of worthlessness, humiliation, and inadequacy when they are exposed to verbal, physical, or emotional abuse by a bully on a regular basis. Over time, unpleasant events and ongoing criticism may damage someone's sense of value and self-confidence. The potential effect on self-esteem increases with the severity and duration of the bullying.

Self-Esteem and Coping Techniques: Self-esteem is a key factor in deciding how people handle challenging circumstances, such as bullying. As they have a better feeling of self-worth and confidence in their talents, people with higher levels of self-esteem often have coping mechanisms that are more successful. When confronted with bullying, they could be better able to make themselves heard, express themselves, and come up with solutions. On the other side, people with low self-esteem may find it difficult to cope, turning to unhealthy coping mechanisms or internalising the unpleasant events.

Bullying and coping mechanisms: coping mechanisms are tools people use to cope with stressful or difficult circumstances. Coping mechanisms used to deal with bullying may be categorised as either adaptive or maladaptive.

II. METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the relationship between bullying and self-esteem among adolescents.
- To identify the coping strategies used by adolescents to deal with the impact of bullying on self-esteem.
- To understand the difference between males and females in bullying.
- To understand the difference between males and females in self-esteem.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: There will be significant relationship between bullying and self-esteem among adolescents.

Hypothesis 2: Adolescents who are bullied will have lower levels of self-esteem than non-bullied adolescents.

Hypothesis 3: There will be significant gender difference on bullying.

Hypothesis 4: There will be significant gender difference on self-esteem.

Hypothesis 5: There will be a positive correlation between self-esteem and coping strategies.

Sample

Adolescents (N=120) aged between 13-19 years. The sample consisted of 68 males and 52 females. The sample were adolescents in Delhi-NCR. Snowball sampling (a non-probability sampling, where it is hard to find or trace back the subjects) was used for data collection.

Research Tools

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale: A popular psychological instrument for measuring self-esteem or self-worth is the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. It was created in 1965 by sociologist Morris Rosenberg and consists of ten statements meant to gauge one's sense of acceptance and self-worth. A 4-point Likert scale, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, is used to score each item. Higher scores indicate higher levels of self-esteem. The responses to these items are added up to obtain a final score. The scale is frequently employed in clinical psychology, educational psychology, and social psychology research because it has been shown to be valid and reliable across a wide range of people and circumstances.

Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale: A condensed version of the Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale (MPVS), which has 16 items, was created in 2012 by Melissa K. Holt and colleagues. The MPVS-16 is a psychological tool that, like the original scale, is used to evaluate the various types and degrees of peer victimisation that kids and teenagers face. 16 items make up the MPVS-16, which is divided into four subscales: verbal abuse, physical abuse, social isolation, and rumour spreading. Each item is evaluated from never (0) to almost every day (4) on a 5-point Likert scale. Higher scores indicate more severe and varied kinds of peer victimisation. The results from each subscale can be added to create a total score. The MPVS-16, which takes less time to complete while still capturing the essential elements of peer victimisation, has been demonstrated to be a valid and reliable measure of peer victimisation in both clinical and research settings. It provides a more effective substitute for the original MPVS.

Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences Scale: A psychological measure called the Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences Scale (ACOPE) is used to evaluate how teenagers cope with stressful or challenging situations. Richard S. Lazarus and Susan Folkman created it in 1984, and Carolyn M. Aldwin modified it for use with teenagers in 1994.

Procedure

For the purpose of data collection, all 120 adolescents were approached in person. Firstly, rapport was established with the adolescents, and they were informed about the purpose of the study and what are the tools administered and how. Consent was taken from the adolescents for their participation in the research. The tools were administered one by one, and all the instructions were given clearly about the same. There are no right or wrong answers. They were kindly asked to respond to all the items. They were informed that the data obtained will only be used for academic research purposes and will not be shared with any organisation under any circumstance. They were also informed that their participation in this study is voluntary. Even after they sign the consent form, they are still free to withdraw at any time.

Data Analysis

For the data analysis and interpretation, the initial scoring was done using Microsoft Excel and after attaining the raw scores, SPSS for Windows was employed. The impact of bullying on the self-esteem of adolescents was examined primarily with the help of SPSS.

- To find out if there is a significant impact of bullying on self-esteem of adolescents, Pearson's Correlation Method was employed.
- To find out if there was a significant effect of gender on bullying and self-esteem, Independent Sample t-test was used.
- To find out the coping strategies used by bullied adolescents Pearson's Correlation Method was employed.

III. RESULTS

Table 1

Group Statistics of MPVS, signifies the t value of Gender and Bullying among bullied adolescents

Test Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.
MPVS	Male	68	23.43	5.578	3.068	118	.003
	Female	52	20.27	5.598			

This table for the research sample (N=120) depicts the group statistics for gender on Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale, it includes the sample size that falls under that category followed by the mean score, standard deviation, and standard error mean. The group of male adolescents (M=23.43, SD=5.578, n=68) has obtained a higher score than the group of female adolescents (M=20.27, SD=5.598, n=52), $df=118$, $t=3.068$, $p= 1.029$) and is significant at 0.01 level. This states that males are more prone to peer victimization than females.

Table 2

Group Statistics of RSES, signifies the t value of Gender and Self-Esteem among bullied adolescents

Test Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.
RSES	Male	68	18.68	8.182	-2.389	118	1.552
	Female	52	22.38	8.738			

This table for the research sample (N=120) depicts the group statistics for gender on Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, it includes the sample size that falls under that category followed by the mean score, standard deviation, and standard error mean. The group of male adolescents (M=18.68, SD=8.182, n=68) have obtained a lower score than the group of female adolescents (M=22.38, SD=8.738, n=52), $df=118$, $t=-2.389$, $p=.018$ and is significant at 0.05 level. This states that females have higher self-esteem than males in bullying situations.

Table 3

Correlations between bullying and self-esteem and self-esteem and coping strategies

		MPVS	RSES	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12
MPVS	Pearson	1	-.780**	-.190*	-.072	-.053	.136	-.076	-.158	-.044	.086	.016	-.108	.033	.081
	Correlation														
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.038	.432	.563	.138	.407	.085	.633	.352	.864	.241	.717	.379
N		120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120
RSES	Pearson	-.780**	1	.365**	.063	.209*	-.110	.161	.260**	.043	-.115	.003	.290**	.073	-.116
	Correlation														
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.497	.022	.230	.080	.004	.639	.211	.977	.001	.431	.206
N		120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table shows correlation between bullying and impact on self-esteem in adolescents. For this research sample (N=120) results indicate that there is a significant negative correlation between bullying and self-esteem in adolescents. The correlation is significant at 0.01 level and the correlation is of high strength.

Correlation between Self-esteem and coping strategies such as Ventilating Feelings (.000) and Developing Self-Reliance and Optimism are significant (.022) at 0.01 and 0.05 levels respectively and coping strategies such as Avoiding Problems (.004) and Engaging in Demanding Activity (.001) are both significant at 0.01 level.

IV. DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this research was to investigate bullying and its impact on adolescent self-esteem and coping strategies. The raw questionnaire scores were analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, independent sample t-tests, and correlation to determine the association between bullying, self-esteem, and coping techniques. The data was gathered from 120 adolescents ranging in age from 13 to 19 years.

The study's first hypothesis was that there would be a strong association between bullying and self-esteem in adolescents. Bullying was shown to have a negative association with self-esteem. The negative correlation shows that if one variable, such as bullying, is discovered to be high, self-esteem will be low, and vice versa. The association between self-esteem and bullying in teenagers was similarly shown to be $-.780$ (significant at the 0.01 level). As a result, we may conclude that there is a strong negative association between bullying and self-esteem, and our hypothesis is accepted. Adolescent bullying, according to Choi et al (2021), may lead to low self-esteem, which raises the likelihood of future bullying. Bullying co-occurrence in these long-term reciprocal relationships is critical but understudied. This study demonstrates how bullying, victimization, and low self-esteem affect youth over time. In three waves (seventh to ninth grades), 3658 Korean secondary students from the Seoul Education Longitudinal Study were assessed using an autoregressive cross-lagged model. After controlling for prior bullying perpetration, victimization, and low self-esteem, victimization and low self-esteem predicted each other longitudinally. Bullying, on the other hand, did not predict eventual low self-esteem. After controlling for bullying and low self-esteem, the relationship between the two becomes evident. Bullying victims may feel unlovable or inept, leading to more victimization. Self-esteem treatments can potentially disrupt the victimization cycle and its temporal stability.

Adolescents who are bullied are more likely to have poor self-esteem, according to the second hypothesis. According to the results of the study, there was a negative relationship between bullying and self-esteem. The link between bullying and self-esteem in adolescents was similarly found to be $-.780$ (significant at the 0.01

level). As a result, we may conclude that there is a strong negative association between bullying and self-esteem because if bullying is high, self-esteem is low, and therefore our hypothesis is accepted.

According to the third hypothesis, males and females will vary on the Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale, which evaluates bullying. The mean for Gender 1 (Male, N=68) was found to be 23.43, while the mean for Gender 2 (Female, N=52) was found to be 20.27. The t-test revealed that the t value of Gender and Bullying among Bullied Adolescents (.003) is significant at the 0.01 level. Males are more vulnerable to peer victimization than females, according to this study. Male adolescents reported higher victimization and perpetration of bullying than female adolescents. Gender differences in bullying were seen to vary greatly among countries, according to Cosma (2022). Boys were more likely than girls to participate in traditional bullying as well as cyberbullying and become victims of it. Gender imbalance in traditional bullying was associated to increased gender inequality at the national level.

According to the fourth hypothesis, there will be a difference in self-esteem between men and women on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The mean for Gender 1 (Male, N=68) was found to be 18.68, while the mean for Gender 2 (Female, N=52) was found to be 22.38. According to the research results, the t value of Gender and Self-esteem among bullied teenagers (.018) is significant at the 0.05 level. In bullying circumstances, females have stronger self-esteem than men.

The final hypothesis predicts a positive correlation between self-esteem and coping strategies. On conducting a correlation between self-esteem and coping techniques, it was shown that coping strategies such as Ventilating Feelings (.000) and Developing Self-Reliance and Optimism (.022) were both significant at the 0.01 and 0.05 levels, respectively. Coping methods such as Avoiding Problems (.004) and Engaging in Demanding Activity (.001) were also shown to be significant at the 0.01 level. Based on social-ecological theory, Ma (2020) studied early adolescents' self-reported coping techniques for school bullying and peer victimization. It was also investigated how school interactions affected the relationship between adolescents' coping methods and psychosocial maladjustment. The findings indicated three types of psychosocial maladjustment (high, moderate, and low) as well as four varied patterns of coping mechanisms used by teenagers against peer victimization (disengaged, adaptive, moderate, and approach with avoidant). Adaptive copers were the least psychologically maladjusted, followed by moderate copers, avoidant with approach copers, and disengaged copers. Second, school ties protected adaptive and moderate copers from psychological maladjustment but not disengaged or approach with avoidant copers. According to the findings, peer victimization and bullying among teens should be seen as a whole. When youth abuse their internalizing and externalizing coping mechanisms, adaptive coping becomes inefficient.

V. CONCLUSION

The study aims to investigate the impact of bullying on the self-esteem of adolescents and the significance of coping strategies in mitigating this impact. Bullying has been highlighted as a widespread problem in schools and communities, having negative consequences for adolescents' psychological well-being. Bullying often results in low self-esteem, which may lead to a variety of negative effects such as depression, anxiety, scholastic problems, and social disengagement. Understanding the connection between bullying, self-esteem, and coping strategies is critical for creating successful intervention and preventive programmes. This study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge base and inform the development of targeted strategies to support adolescents in building resilience, fostering healthy self-esteem, and effectively navigating bullying experiences by examining the significance of coping strategies in buffering the negative effects of bullying on self-esteem. Finally, the results of this research have the potential to enhance the well-being and mental health outcomes of bullied adolescents.

Bullying was shown to have a substantial association with self-esteem and coping strategies, according to the research. There was also a link between gender and bullying, as well as self-esteem.

VI. LIMITATIONS

- The conclusions of the research may only apply to the particular demographic or sample that was employed, making it challenging to extrapolate the findings to a wider group. For instance, the results may not be characteristic of teenagers from varied cultural, socioeconomic, or geographic backgrounds if the research primarily focuses on a single school or area.
- The study's data collection relies on self-report methods like questionnaires. This opens the door to the potential of response bias, in which individuals may underreport their experiences or feelings as a result of social desirability bias or problems with recollection. The accuracy of the findings may be impacted by certain people who underreport or hold back on discussing their genuine emotions or experiences with bullying.
- Numerous research on bullying, self-esteem, and coping mechanisms are correlational in nature, which means they may show connections but cannot prove causation.
- Studies on bullying and self-esteem often use cross-sectional data, which records information at a certain moment. The long-term consequences of bullying on self-esteem and coping mechanisms are better supported by longitudinal studies that follow individuals over a prolonged period of time. Determining the directionality of the link and the long-term effects of bullying might be difficult in the absence of longitudinal data.
- Some people could find taking part in such studies upsetting, therefore researchers should be aware of possible damage and provide options for participants who might need help.

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