



Exploring The Effect Of Bullying On Adolescents' Depression: A Comprehensive Analysis

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Abstract: This study was conducted to make an in-depth analysis of the correlation between bullying and depression in adolescents. Various research papers and case studies have been examined. The purpose of the study is to determine the impact of bullying and depression on adolescents. The collective evidence from the various research papers and case studies brings out the severe impact of bullying on the mental health of children and adolescents leading to adolescent depression. The study also highlighted various factors like gender differences, socioeconomic status, suicidality etc. within the context of bullying and depression. This study also enlightens on various important interventions which can assist in resolving this pressing issue. The research addresses the urgency of interventions and various preventive strategies, which would help to reduce the adverse effects of bullying on psychological wellbeing of children and adolescents. Hence, this study aspires to promote a healthier and happier life for future generations.

Keywords: Bullying, Anxiety, Adolescent Depression, Anxiety, Cyberbullying, Traditional Bullying, Gender Disparity, Schools.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Bullying

Bullying is a harmful situation which is marked by deliberate, repeated acts of intentional, verbal or physical abuse, by one individual or a group of people against another. (Fante, 2005)

Researchers have found that bullying is harmful for both bullies and victims, hampering their social, emotional, psychological state and academics.

1.2 Depression

Depression (major depressive disorder) is a common and serious mental illness that has a negative impact on one's feelings, thinking and behavior.

Depression symptoms can vary from mild to severe, including sadness, loss of interest in previously enjoyable activities, changes in appetite and weight, sleep disturbances, fatigue, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, difficulty in concentrating, suicide thoughts, etc.

Psychotherapy like Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), Group Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT), Self-help and Coping: exercise, good habits, yoga etc. are effective treatment methods.

1.3 Link between victims of bullying and the development of depression

A causal relationship between experiencing bullying and developing depression is a very essential and publicly debatable topic. Traumatic incidents related to peer interactions, such as bullying, can lead to severe emotional trauma to the development of depression.

1.4 Relationship between the victim of bullying and symptoms of depression

Numerous cross-sectional surveys conducted among adolescent populations across various countries and developmental phases have consistently revealed a strong association between being a victim of bullying and symptoms of depression, as well as a link between bullying victimization and suicidal thoughts or behaviours.

Lund and Jordanova (2011) also reported that experiencing bullying at school was associated with a higher risk of clinical depression in adulthood. Prolonged and more intensive bullying can become a severe risk factor for depression. Due et al reported that bullying victimization in adolescence was a predictor of depression in young adulthood especially affecting socioeconomically disadvantaged adolescents than affluent backgrounds.

There is also evidence suggesting prior depression may act as a predictor for subsequent victimization through bullying or that the relationship between being bullied and experiencing depression is bidirectional. In a study by Fekkes et al, victimization emerged as a precursor to depression, but depression and anxiety also predicted subsequent bullying victimization

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

West & Salmon (2000) in their case study of a thirteen-year-old boy about bullying and depression who was subjected to bullying experiences which included verbal harassment, later developed to verbal and physical harm since 9 years of age was reported to be diagnosed with psychotic depression along with suicidal thoughts, low self-esteem, and dyslexia. With intervention, improvement was observed.

Saluja, Lachan and Giedd (2004) in their research which seeks to identify the prevalence and risk factors for depressive symptoms among young adolescents in US schools found that substance use, somatic symptoms, scholastic behaviors, and involvement in bullying are the major risk factors for depressive symptoms among adolescents. Adolescents who were frequently exposed to bullying, either as perpetrators or victims, were twice as likely to get diagnosed with depressive symptoms.

Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld and Gould (2007) in their research, Bullying, depression, and suicidality among adolescents found 9% of the sample experienced frequent victimization, and 13% were frequent bullies. Those who were frequently victimized or engaged in bullying had a significantly higher risk of depression, and suicidality compared to those not involved in bullying. Even occasional involvement in bullying increased risks, mainly for girls. Psychopathology was seen to be linked with bullying both in and outside school. Bullying, whether as a victim or bully, is predicted to be a major risk factor for adolescent depression and suicidality.

Due, Damsgaard, Lund, and Holstein (2009) in their research about bullying and depression in an age range of 15 to 27 years old, seeks to study whether bullying is equally harmful for rich and poor children. It was found that bullying in childhood and adolescence significantly raises the risk of depression in young adulthood. Bullying is more harmful for individuals with less affluent backgrounds.

Fleming & Jacobsen (2009) in their study, on determining the relationship between bullying and depression among Chilean Middle School students found a significant relationship between depression and bullying. Additionally, it was found that the majority of students who reported to face depression were bullied. Gender differences were also detected as boys were found to get bullied more than girls while girls were reported to face depression more than boys.

Kaltiala-Heino, Fröjd & Marttunen (2010) in their research, based on a case study, seeks to see if involvement in bullying at school causes depression and vice versa. The results detected that boys being both a bully and a bully victim are predicted to get later depression. A conclusion was drawn that victimization to bullying can potentially lead to trauma which would further result in depression. Among girls' prolonged depression played a stronger role in predicting later depression, whereas among boys, bullying involvement played a stronger role in later depression.

Perren, Dooley, Shaw & Cross (2010) in their research, Bullying in school and cyberspace: which was based on cyber versus traditional bullying and depressive symptoms among Swiss and Australian adolescents, found that traditional victims and bully-victims were reported to get higher levels of depressive symptoms compared to bullies and children who were not bully-victims. Also cyberbullying victims reported to face higher symptoms of depression.

Raskauskas (2010) in their research which seeks to find out the Text-Bullying and Traditional Bullying with Depression among New Zealand Adolescents, found a significant relationship between the frequency and combination of traditional and text-based bullying. 43% of students had encountered text-bullying. Those who experienced both text-bullying and traditional bullying reported more depressive symptoms than the rest.

Huddleston, Varjas & Cadenhead (2011) in their research, based on a case study conducted on a bully while exploring an intervention for bullies with implications for anti-bullying policies and practices. Both the Qualitative and quantitative data revealed a reduction in internalizing, and externalizing bullying behaviors as per reports from teachers, mothers and various stakeholders. Various interventions were addressed in this study.

Magklara, Skapinakis, Gkatsa, Bellos, Araya, Stylianidis, and Mavreas (2012) in their study examined the relationship between bullying and socioeconomic positions among Greek adolescents in schools. Psychiatric morbidity was found to be significant with all types of bullying behaviors, but socioeconomic positions were mostly insignificant.

Tippett, and Wolke (2014) in their study which explored whether socioeconomic status could be used as a determining factor to see if school children have higher chances of being bullied. Low socioeconomic backgrounds were more prevalent among victims and bully-victims while high socioeconomic backgrounds were less prevalent among bullies and victims.

Kim, Mazenga, Yu, Devandra, Nguyen, Ahmed, Kazembe, and Sharp (2015) who sought to identify the factors linked with depression among HIV-Infected Adolescents in Malawi, found prevalence of depression among them was 18.9%. The study identified several factors: female gender, having few schooling years, death in the family, academic pressures, having a boyfriend or girlfriend, hiding one's HIV status, suffering from severe immunosuppression and facing bullying for taking medication, were associated with higher scores of depression. It was also found that having fewer years of schooling and being bullied for taking medications were strongly associated with depression symptoms.

Uba, Yaacob & Juhari (2017) in their research on Bullying and Its Relationship with Depression among Teenagers found a positive and significant relationship between bullying and depression among teenagers. Further, a significant gender difference between males and females in bullying was also found and a non-significant difference in depression was found between males and females.

Oriol, Miranda, Amutio, Acosta & Torres-Vallejos (2017) in their research, Violent relationships at the social-ecological level developing a multi-mediation model for predicting adolescent victimization by peers, bullying and depression in early and late adolescence, the study found a significant relationship between both adolescent and teachers' behavior. Teachers' aggressive behavior generally causes depression, social isolation, being targeted by peers, and violence.

Hill and Sharp (2017) in their research, The Role of Bullying in depressive symptoms from Adolescence to Emerging Adulthood first identified four trajectories of depressive symptoms in adolescents, which are: mild, increasing, elevated, and decreasing. It was found that experiencing bullying and cyberbullying as victims had a severe impact on these trajectories throughout adolescence being a penetrator as both bully and cyberbully didn't have a similar impact.

Charoenwanit (2018) in his study which seeks to assess the relationship between cyberbullying and its impact on academic achievement, general health, and depression among adolescents in Thailand found a significant relationship between academic achievement, general health, and depression among adolescents in Thailand. The study has also spread awareness about cyberbullying among families and schools.

Lutrick, Clark, Nuño, Bauman & Carvajal (2020) in their research, Latinx bullying and depression in children and youth based on a systematic review of the inclusion of Latinx participants in bullying and depression studies,

found a significant relationship between bullying and depression. It further suggested the urgency of larger and more detailed studies for more improvised and better interventions.

Simmons & Antshel (2020) in their research, about Bullying and Depression in Youth with ADHD found a significant relation between ADHD symptoms, bullying involvement, and symptoms of depression. ADHD was seen to be a predisposing factor for involvement in bullying. Bullying was seen to mediate or moderate the connection between ADHD and depression in youth.

Okumu, Kim, Sanders, Makubuya, Small, and Hong (2020) in their research, which seeks to assess the relationships between face-to-face and cyberbullying victimization, symptoms of depression and academic achievement among U.S. adolescents, revealed that both face-to-face and cyberbullying victimization significant correlates with poor academic performance. It was noted that depression also hampered the academic performances of both males and females.

Da Silva, De Oliveira, Komatsu, Zequinão, Pereira, Caravita, Skrzypiec measured and Silva (2020) in their research on Relations between Bullying and Depression among Students in Brazilian public Schools revealed that Victims were nine times more likely to have depression than other students. Depression among girls was found to have a significant relation with all forms of bullying and victimization. Depression among boys was found to be significantly correlated with only verbal and relational victimization.

Gower, Rider, Brown and Eisenberg (2022) in their research, Diverse Sexual and Gender Identity, Bullying, and Depression among Adolescents found greater depressive symptoms among pansexual students than those other sexual orientations and also among nonbinary and transmasculine youth who considered their sexual identities as females.

Ye, Wu & Tong (2023) in their research investigating the relationship between bullying and depressive symptoms in children and adolescents found a positive significant relationship between depression in children and adolescents and their participation in bullying, as victims and bullies. Gender differences were also detected as boys were found to get bullied more than girls. Bullied teenagers were more likely to experience depression than others.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design:

A qualitative research design was made concentrating on analyzing existing literature to examine the effect of bullying on adolescent depression.

3.2 Research Objective:

The primary objective of this study is to explore existing literature to gain information about the impact of bullying on adolescent depression. This research intends to provide a detailed understanding of the relationship between bullying and adolescents' depression from analyzing the findings.

3.4 Literature Review Search Strategy:

A comprehensive literature survey was conducted in electronic databases such as Google Scholar, and PsycINFO, using keywords like "depression," "bullying," "mental health," to identify relevant literature on the subject.

3.5 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:

Inclusion criteria consisted of research articles published within the last twenty-five years, written in English, focusing on the impact of bullying on adolescent depression. Exclusion criteria consisted of studies which did not focus on the impact of bullying on adolescent depression.

3.6 Data Collection:

The data for this study consists of literature reviews and research articles selected from the initial search.

3.7 Quality Assessment:

The credibility and quality of the literature included in the analysis were evaluated by assessing the research methodologies, sample sizes, and the findings from the selected sources.

IV. DISCUSSION

The elaborate analysis of various journals and case studies on the impact of bullying on adolescents' depression demonstrates several important aspects.

4.1 Bullying as a Significant Risk Factor for Depression:

It is evident from the studies that bullying is a primary risk factor for depression in children and adolescents (West & Salmon, 2000; Klomek et al., 2007; Perren et al., 2010; Raskauskas, 2010 and Simmons et al., 2020). Whether Traditional bullying such as verbal abuse, physical abuse, or cyberbullying, the dreadful consequences on victims are seen.

4.2 Difference between Bully Victims and Bullies:

A difference in the impact of bullying between victims and perpetrators was also noted. (Klomek et al., 2007; Perren et al., 2010; Raskauskas, 2010 and Simmons et al., 2020) While both groups can experience adverse mental trauma, the bully-victims were reported to get more severe depressive symptoms. The research addresses the urgency of interventions in the schools for helping the people.

4.3 Gender Disparities:

Gender differences were evident in both bully victims and perpetrators regarding experience of bullying and depression (Fleming et al., 2009 and Klomek et al., 2007). Boys are more frequently reported to face bullying, while girls tend to experience depression more than boys. These issues regarding gender disparities urges the need for developing interventions as it would help to address the unique challenges faced by each gender and resolve them.

4.4 Effect of Cyberbullying:

The dreadful effect of cyberbullying was also explored. Adolescents, increasingly exposed to cyber bullying, would face severe consequences in their mental health. (Perren et al., 2010 and Raskauskas, 2010). It was suggested that parents, educators, and policymakers should work together and create safe online environments for the adolescents and future generation.

4.5 Socioeconomic position:

This study has also stated the complexity of bullying by investigating its intersection with cultural background and socioeconomic status. It was revealed how lower socioeconomic status could become a higher risk factor for depression among adolescents. (Due et al., 2009 and Tippett et al., 2014)

4.6 Health issues:

Adolescents with bullying experience for taking HIV medication had chances of higher depression levels. (Kim et al., 2015)

4.7 Link between Bullying, depression and suicidality:

It was found that bully victims are more prone to experience depression, suicidal thoughts and engaging in suicidal behaviors. (Klomek et al., 2007 and De Silva et al., 2020)

4.8 Effectiveness of Interventions:

The effectiveness of targeted interventions in reducing bullying behaviors was highlighted. (Huddleston et al., 2011 and Simmons et al., 2020). These interventions, addressing individual demands and environmental factors, hold the potential to reduce the harmful effects of bullying. It is essential to implement these strategies for creating a supportive and secured educational and professional setting.

In summary, the findings from these various studies provide a detailed understanding of the impact of bullying and depression on adolescents. They address the urgent need for developing interventions to prevent bullying, provide support for the victims and depressed adolescents. Lastly, it suggests that schools, families, communities, and online platforms should work together to protect and nurture the psychological well-being of adolescents and spread awareness on the importance of positive mental health.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings from the various research papers and case studies summarized the severe impact of bullying on the mental health of children and adolescents resulting in adolescent depression. Victims of bullying are particularly vulnerable and gender differences in both bullying experiences and depressive symptoms have been brought out. Cyberbullying has become a brutal threat for adolescents in the digital age so collective efforts from schools, families, and digital platforms are required for creating a safe and supportive environment for adolescents. Interventions should be preached and practiced to ensure positive mental health and well-being where people should work collectively towards a future where the mental well-being of adolescents is protected and secured.

5.1 Limitations:

Limited Publishing Range: The research primarily focused on studies published within the last twenty-five years. Although it presents a contemporary perspective, it might exclude valuable knowledge from earlier research.

5.2 Future Scope:

Preventive measures: The future researchers should emphasize more on the effectiveness of different preventive strategies and interventions, including school-based programs and online safety measures that can provide proper solutions for reducing the impact of bullying on adolescent depression.

Roles of Bystanders: Future researchers should try to incorporate the roles of bystanders in bullying-related behaviors and their potential influence on adolescent mental health.

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