

Bullying: Age and Gender Differences

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ABSTRACT

Bullying means misuse of force, power, threat and involve in aggressive behaviors towards others. It can occur anywhere in society like school, home, workplace and any social gathering. This bullying act is common for all age groups but most common among children. There are four possible forms of bullying behavior among children like verbal, physical, relational and cyberbully. In worldwide, almost one-third of young teens were experiences bullying. In that, approximately 41% of school going children were remain bullied with age group of 12-18 years at every year. It's necessary, Children need to learn that bullying behavior causes unhealthy environment and promote serious effects on the bullied children's social, emotional and physical well-being. Govt of India have enacted anti-bullying laws to control and prohibit bullying mainly in schools and colleges. Everyone has vital role in prevention of bullying behavior among children, especially parents, teachers and school health nurses to take necessary measures to control it.

KEYWORDS: Bullying; Age; Gender; Behavior and Anti bullying laws.

INTRODUCTION

In 1530, the word "bully" was first used which means of sweetheart applied to address sex. It was borrowed from the word Dutch boel meaning as

"lover or brother". In 17th century, the meaning was deteriorated to "fine fellow", blusterer and harasser. It indicates logic in between lover and ruffian. In 1710, first attested the verb "to bully" with meaning of usually one whose claims to strength and courage to another. It is based on the intimidation of those who are weaker.¹ Though there are various types of bullying behavior with different forms and shapes; children are unique in selecting the way to respond it. Subsequently, the teachers and parents were need to know about the significance of bullying behavior among children.² In India, only limited researches are available about bullying due to imbalance between population size and their sociocultural factors like religion, caste, gender and color.³

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MEANING OF BULLYING

The behavior of a person who hurts or frightens someone smaller or less powerful and often forcing that person to do something which they do not want to do - Cambridge Dictionary.⁴

CURRENT STATISTICS

In worldwide, almost one-third of young teens have recently experienced bullying behavior mainly in school. It ranges from high in Samoa (74%) and low in Tajikistan (7%). It also pervasive to across all countries especially Afghanistan (44%), Canada (35%), Tanzania (26%) and Argentina (24%). Globally, in gender wise boys (32%) are slightly more at risk of bullying in schools than girls (28%). some pervasive countries were reported the controversial views about bullying behavior in which slightly high incidence in girls (65%) than boys (62%). It means girls are more extensively impacted from bullying. In developed countries, low socioeconomic status and immigrant youth are main predictors for bullying.⁵

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS - 2018) stated that, almost 1/5 students (20.2%) are bullied. Approximately 41% of school going children bullied with aged 12-18 years in the school every year. In various forms of bullying. 13% of them involved in fun of called names or insulted, 13% rumor's, 5% pushed or spit on, and 5% were excluded from activities on purpose; Apart from this, 35% were involved in traditional and 15% involved in cyberbully in that 14.5% in online. Among them nearly 19,000 bulled children were committing suicide over a year.⁶

Common forms of bullying Among Children

There are two main types of bullying behavior among children. It based on number of children involved which termed as individual and group bullying and also some common forms of bullying

like verbal, physical, relational, and cyberbully.⁷

Verbal Bullying

It means use of threat full or cruel words and making disrespectful comments about one's color, appearance, sexual orientation, caste, religion and ethnicity etc. It is also fun of ongoing name calling and criticizes about one's disability.

Ex: When a slim girl says to fatty girl, "You're really looking obese."

Physical bullying

It involves the act of repeated aggressive intimation to others inappropriately. like unwanted touch of others, hitting, pushing, kicking, blocking etc.

Ex: A boy gets his uniform pulled down on the class room during break time

Relational Bullying

It involves with exclusionary tactics (i.e) deliberately preventing someone from joining or being part of a group. It may happen at lunch table, game, sports, or during social gathering. *It is also called social bullying.*

Ex: A group of girls in dance class keeps talking about poor score in examination and treating the one uninvited child as if she were absent.

CYBERBULLY

It is encompassing in cyberspace which cause threats to someone by spreading lies, false rumors through electronic devices. It may be in the form of texts, e-mails and social media posts by some personalities like racist, sexist etc. This type of homophobic messages creates discomfort atmosphere to children when not involve directly.

Ex: Some one posts that Surya is a total loser and mentally unstable in social media.



Fig. 1: Common Forms of Bullying (Source: dreams time.com 2020)

BULLYING CYCLE

According to Salmivalli (2014), Bullying is a conceptualized as a group phenomenon with multiple peers taking part other than bully and victim. Bullying cycle shows students' mode of reaction and consist of eight characteristics as follow as in figure 2.⁸

The bully/ bullies are the person who perpetrator in a particular incident first. They are intentionally causing inflicts or injury to someone else.

Followers/Henchmen: They are assistants or henchmen who get involved to help the perpetrator once the episode has begun.

Supporters: They are reinforces who encourage the perpetrator by laughing or showing other signs of approval.

Passive supporters: The person who are present during the bullying event but remain neutral (passive) and helping neither the target nor the perpetrator.

Disengaged onlookers: They are witnessed the whole bullying incident but never take any action to prevent bullying.

Possible defenders: They dislike the bullying act and also thought to help the victim but they do not do.

Defenders of the victim: The persons who were supporting actively to a victim are called as defenders. Less than 20 percent of defenders were supported to the victims who witnessed during bullying episodes/

The victim: The individual who exposed to any forms of bullying behavior.

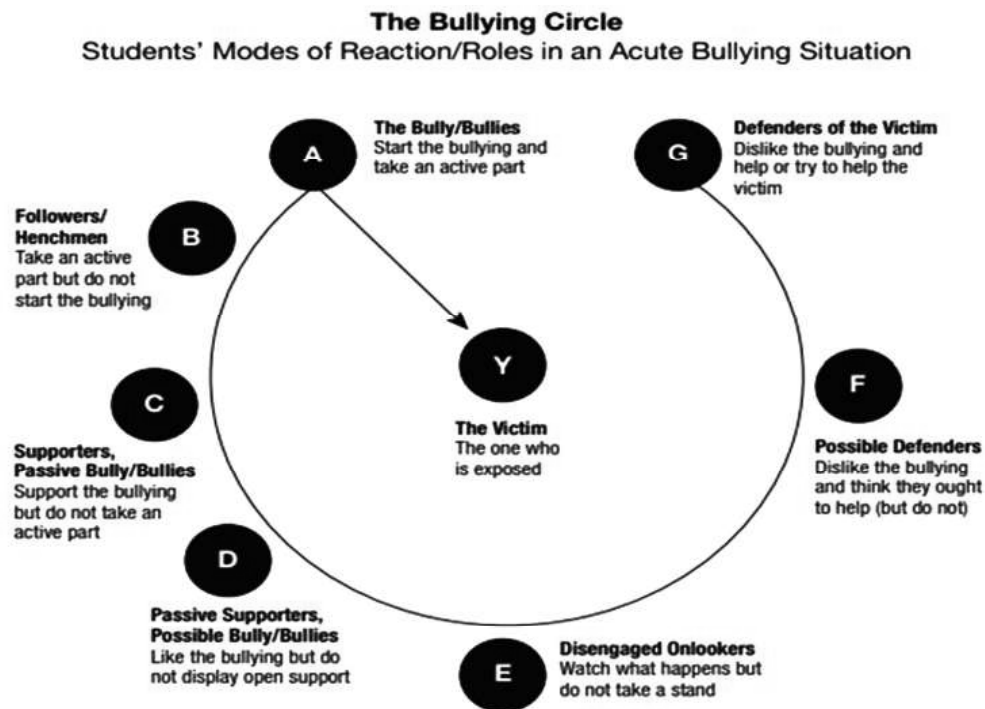


Fig. 2: Eight Characteristics of Bullying Cycle (National Academies Press (US); 2016).

This bullying cycle suggests that children are highly motivated to bully others for purpose of attain high status among their friends. By the way, they are very popular and easily dominate others. Finally, they need spectators to confer their high status and respect.⁹

IMPACT OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Bulling leads to promote serious effects among both bully and bullied children up to their

lifetime. Initially it causes negative emotions like sadness, hopelessness, shame, worthlessness and also increases their anxiety level and depression. Simultaneously it affects the children's cognitive functions which lead to low self-esteem, self-doubts, disturbance in daily routines, changes in eating pattern and sleep, academic failures, withdraw from society and involve in antisocial behaviors. Finally, it may lead to risk of suicide. It also affects the bully's mental well-being which causes the persistent mental illness among them.¹⁰

BULLYING AMONG KIDS (3 TO 5 YRS.)

Kids start to learn about bullying behaviour in home itself like simple fights with siblings and name calling. It occurs due to inability to manage some strong emotions like anger, frustrations or insecurity. The reasons, effects and strategies of kid bullying are depicted in Table 1. Almost 20% of kids were involved in bully like activities but sometime kids torment others by the way they've been treated.

Table1: Reasons, Effects And Strategies of Kids Bullying

Reasons for kids bullying	Effects of kids bullying	Strategies to overcome kids bullying
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feels insecure • Inability to manage strong emotions • Poor coping behavior • To control others in family • Inadequate development of ego defence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor peer relationships • Academic failures • Anti-social behaviour initially 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take bullying seriously • Teach kids to treat others with respect and kindness • Learn about children's social life • Encourage good behaviour

BULLYING AMONG CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS (5 - 19 YRS.)

Bullying transforms the negative acts among children and adolescents which may be in physical or verbal form. It affects the school environment and learning ability which leads to criminal and illegal behaviour in both bullies and victims. The most common forms of bullying among children and adolescent are higher percentage (59%) of them cyberbullies, 42% affected with offensive name calling and other forms of bullying were depicted in Figure 3.¹²



Fig. 3: Different forms of bullying among adolescent (Bishop A et al., 2020)

How to deal bullying behavior among adolescents

- Educate children about types of bullying
- Help them to report to an authority about bullying incident.
- Explain them how to handle the bullying,

Generally, kids may think that aggressive behaviors are normal way of expression of anger because they were observing that their family members got angry with anyone, immediately shouts them in the home. To support this, social media seem to portraint some forms of aggressive behaviors or ridiculous acts are as part of heroism which kids were learned through TV too. Subsequently, parents need to educate their children that bullying is form of harassment to others.¹¹

help them to learn self-defence and act as brave in any bullying circumstances.

Gender based bullying

Every bullying experience is unique. It based on not only the type of bully but also the gender involved in the bullying. The bullying approach among boys & girls may vary.¹³

MALE BULLYING

Physical bullying is more common among boys than girls. Boys are forming a group of followers to acknowledge their bullying act. Most of the male can bully both girls and boys and also more open about their bullying behaviour. Bullying episodes are shorter and quicker among boys than girls. (Girls often hold grudges).

Female bullying

Relational or indirect bullying is more common among girls like verbal assaults, spreading rumors and gossip. Girls were experiences more sexual bullying than boys like rumors spread about sexual activity and receiving sexual messages or harassment from male. Most of the female bullies do not act alone; they tend to have accomplices or followers who support their behaviors.

Transgender bullying

Transgender teens are being bullied 1.5–2 times more than mainstream teens. 90% transgender was reported being bullied in UK. In India, almost 2% of school going students identify as transgender. Out of them, nearly 27% of them not feeling good

to go to school, 35% of them are bullied in school campus itself and 35% were attempted suicide. Transgender youth are mostly experiences bullying related to their sexual orientation, weight and size. Therefore, necessary actions are recommended to control bullying among gender minority.¹⁴

MEASURES TO MANAGE AND PREVENT BULLYING^{15,16,17}

Anti-bullying Laws

The Government of India has enacted a regulation called “UGC regulations on curbing the menace of ragging in higher education institutions, 2009” which has been applied to all the colleges or higher education institutions to stop bullying among students.

Anti-bullying committee

Human resource development minister formed a committee with teachers and mental health professionals as anti-bullying committee. They have to analyze bullying behaviors in schools and take measures to stop and prevent it.

CBSE School Bullying Protection Law

In order to stop bullying behavior especially cyberbully formulated the CBSE guides to all its affiliated schools to follows,

- **Form a committee:** Formed a committee in every school which helps to deal bullying and ragging.
- **Committee Members:** Committee members should include the vice- principal, senior teacher, doctor, counselor, parent-teacher representative, school management and legal representatives.

Activities of anti-bullying committee

Rustication: If they found any student is involved in ragging or bullying, they will give written warning and also lead to of the particular student.

- **School Notice Board:** Paste a warning notice on a display about bully.
- **Anti-ragging Laws**

Anti-bullying Laws also enacted to control bullying behavior in worldwide.¹⁷

- **Arresting:** India’s anti-ragging laws lead to immediate arrests of those who are caught in ragging.
- **First Incident Report (FIR):** The victim can avail thirteen provisions under Indian Penal Code if he has been ragged or bullied and can

register an FIR in the police station under the area where the crime has taken place. The person can apply in various Indian sections of Laws like Section 294 - Obscene acts and songs, Section 339 - Wrongful restraint, Section 506 - Punishment for criminal intimidation

Role of parents¹⁸

Although school is a right place to deal bullying effectively, parents have key role to empower kids to prevent bullying behaviors.

- Build Trust with your children.
- Talk regularly and specifically with your children about online issues.
- Be a good listener and observing children’s aggressive behavior.
- Be friendly with children and gather the information exactly.
- Validate the child’s feeling and provide reassurance
- Attend periodical meeting and get feedback of child attitude & academic performance from their teachers.
- Be aware of our child activity in social media.

Nurses Responsibilities to control school-based bullying¹⁹

- **School wide interventions:** Student Nurses take a survey / project of bullying problems at school and make in-service training to raise the awareness among children and school staff regarding bullying.
- **Classroom-level interventions:** Arrange for periodical meeting along with teachers for establishment of classroom rules against bullying, conduct regular class meetings along with parents to prevent bullying at school.
- **Individual-level interventions:** School Health Nurses have discussion with students to identify the bullies & victims and refer to counseling services in person or telephone help lines.

CONCLUSION

Children should learn that bullying behaviors causes serious effects on bullied children's social, emotional and physical well-being. Govt of India have enacted anti bullying laws to prohibit bullying

behavior in school and colleges. All the community members especially school health nurses have vital role in addressing and preventing it. Every year, we are celebrating October month is National bullying prevention month. All school institutions are should take initiation to instruct their students to wear orange color dress and disseminate information about bullying prevention through school magazines, social media post, parent letter and websites aids to promote healthy children in future.

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