

The Impact of Bullying on Students' Mental Health: A Case Study

Introduction

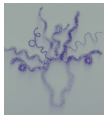
Bullying is a widespread problem in schools and can have **long-term psychological impacts** on victims, bullies, and bystanders, as well as academic consequences. This study aims to analyze effective methods for prevention and intervention, exploring the psychological impact of bullying on students.



Despite the government's efforts and the enactment of anti-bullying laws, bullying and school **violence remain prevalent** in the Philippines, affecting countless individuals in the country.

Bullying cases in schools have increased since the implementation of the anti-bullying law in 2013, with 11,637 cases reported in 2019-2020.

Bullying takes various forms, including cyber-bullying, and may cause **harm to the victim's mental health and emotional wellbeing** through defamatory statements, name-calling, torment, and disparaging remarks about their appearance, clothing, and physical make-up.



According to a survey by the Programme for the International Student Assessment (PISA), Filipino high school students are highly exposed to bullying, with **65% experiencing it at least a few times a month**. This is significantly higher than the 23% average among 79 countries surveyed.

Introduction

Around 63.2% of Grade 5 students in the Philippines **experience bullying at least once a month** in schools, according to the SEA-PLM 2019 data. This figure is consistent with the National Baseline Survey on Violence Against Children in 2016 and PISA data from 2018.

This study targets the **psychological effects of bullying on students** in a bid to identify effective preventive measures and aid ongoing anti-bullying efforts.

Review of Related Literature

This chapter consists of the related literature and studies from published sources reviewed and organized as the conceptual backdrop of the study. It focuses mainly on the concepts and principles of **The Impact of Bullying on Students' Mental Health**.

Bullying is commonly defined as an ongoing pattern of physical, verbal, sexual, or psychological abuse or intimidation, usually started by someone who is thought to be stronger physically or mentally. In general, bullying or victimization occurs when a student is repeatedly subjected to damaging behaviors by one or more other students over a prolonged period of time.

In the past, bullying was often regarded as inconsequential, with the belief that being victimized helped in the character development of children (Cartwright, 1995). According to Olweus (1993, 1995), a bullying victim is defined as an individual who experiences aggressive behavior from someone with more power, and bullying occurs when someone is consistently exposed to harmful actions by one or more students over a period of time. People who have been victims of bullying often lack a practical means to address the **buildup of psychological issues, such as panic, social anxiety, and depression**. As a result, this may lead to **outbursts and engagement in unlawful and anti-social behaviors**. (Li, 2016; Liu and Lu, 2017).

Review of Related Literature

The articles discussed how bullying can be defined and conceptualized. By exploring diverse viewpoints, the study aims to acquire a comprehensive understanding of how bullying is being perceived by different individuals, communities and cultures. This study will help to shed light on the complexities of bullying and its implications to effective preventions and interventions.

The presence of persecutory thoughts and hallucinations remained linked to bullying even after accounting for sociodemographic factors, IQ, other traumatic experiences, and childhood sexual abuse. Bullying also correlated with a likely diagnosis of psychosis. (Catone et al. 2015)

Bullying commonly occurs due to factors such as physical appearance, social status, and skin color. Most of the individuals who were bullied encountered verbal abuse, ridicule, mocking expressions, or threatening gestures. They were often the subjects of gossip or exclusion. Schoolmates and close friends were responsible for nearly half of the bullying incidents. For many respondents, bullying was seen as a component of social interaction or “fun” among friends. (National Baseline Survey on Violence Against Children, 2016).

Patterns of violence across generations: As per the National Baseline Study on Violence Against Children in the Philippines, parents who were victims of violence and experienced physical discipline during their own childhoods tend to continue the practice of using violent forms of discipline with their own children, as that’s what they have learned. The Systematic Literature Review on the Drivers Affecting Children has highlighted findings from the Parenting across Cultures Study, which suggests that a belief in the normalcy and necessity of corporal punishment is a significant predictor of both mothers’ and fathers’ use of such punishment. The data in this research indicates a strong likelihood that these children may also resort to corporal punishment with their own future children, thereby perpetuating a cycle of intergenerational violence against children. (UNICEF, 2016).



Types of Bullying

Verbal bullying occurs when an individual, acting as a bully, **employs offensive or belittling language to ridicule**, shame, or offend someone else (Robichaud, 2017). The individuals involved go through instances of playful taunting and verbal insults, which **result in emotional distress** and erode their sense of safety.



Physical bullying involves the application of physical strength against a fellow student, potentially resulting in a range of serious physical injuries. It **encompasses actions like hitting, punching, beating, slapping, and causing harm to personal belongings**. Consequently, these actions may lead to **damage, theft, or concealment of the victims' possessions** such as books, clothing, and other personal items (Ribakova & Valeeva, 2016).



Psychological bullying is characterized by the deliberate and repetitive use of words or behaviors with the intent of causing psychological harm to an individual or a group. Often, individuals within popular groups or cliques engage in bullying against those they perceive as different by **excluding them or spreading gossip about them** (Lee, 2004).



Types of Bullying



Social bullying is a form of bullying, occasionally known as “covert bullying” is frequently more challenging to identify as it often takes place discreetly, without the victim’s immediate awareness. Its purpose is to **damage an individual’s social standing and provoke humiliation**. This can involve actions like **spreading false information and rumors**, making negative facial expressions or subtle physical gestures, giving menacing or scornful looks, playing hurtful pranks to embarrass and shame, imitating or mocking unkindly, persuading others to **socially isolate someone, or undermining someone’s social reputation** and acceptance (NCAB, 2023).

The **Cyber Bullying Research Centre** provides the following definition for cyberbullying: It involves the deliberate and repetitive infliction of harm through the utilization of computers, mobile phones, and various electronic devices. Cyberbullying encompasses both **overt and covert bullying actions** carried out via digital technologies, including hardware like computers and smartphones, as well as software such as social media, instant messaging, text messages, websites, and other online platforms. Cyberbullying can take the form of hurtful or abusive texts, emails, or online posts, sharing harmful images or videos, the intentional exclusion of individuals in online spaces, spreading unpleasant gossip or rumors, impersonating others online, or using their login credentials (NCAB, 2023).



Causes of Bullying

The primary reasons for bullying were often related to the victim's physical appearance, social status, or skin color. Most of the individuals who reported being bullied experienced verbal insults, mockery, intimidating gestures, and hostile looks, along with incidents of gossiping or neglect. Just under half of the bullying incidents were attributed to the victim's classmates and close friends. According to a substantial portion of the respondents, engaging in bullying with friends was seen as an activity for amusement (Zafra, 2023).

Effects of Bullying to Students' Mental Health

Bullying has been linked to various physical and psychological health issues, including conditions such as anxiety and depression, an elevated likelihood of self-harm, suicide attempts, or completed suicide, as well as a decline in academic performance and involvement in criminal or delinquent activities (Juvonen et al., 2011; Lereya et al., 2015; Olweus, 1993; Ttofi et al., 2011; Vaillancourt et al., 2010). Moreover, the enduring negative consequences of peer bullying on the mental health of adults can surpass those of childhood abuse and maltreatment (Lereya et al., 2015). Adults who were subjected to bullying during their childhood face an increased risk of unemployment and have lower financial accumulation compared to adults who did not experience bullying (Brimblecombe et al., 2018).

Both physical violence and bullying within educational institutions have adverse effects on students, leading to disruptions in their schooling or academic progress, ultimately raising the incidence of students leaving school prematurely and experiencing suicidal tendencies (Jacobs, 2013).

Effects of bullying to students' mental health

Certain physical symptoms connected to being a victim of bullying consist of headaches, stomach discomfort, and back pain. On the other hand, psychological victimization is linked to feelings of anxiety, depression, a sense of helplessness, and isolation. Additionally, among the immediate responses to bullying victimization are irritability, persistent feelings of fear or anxiety, recurring recollection of the victimization, and difficulty concentrating. Adolescents who experience bullying victimization encounter psychological repercussions, including depressive symptoms, thoughts of suicide, and feelings of isolation (Frisen, 2007).

Preventive Methods and Intervention

Educational initiatives should direct their efforts toward addressing socio-emotional and moral factors associated with the various identified profiles that precede engagement in bullying. By targeting these factors, it is possible to mitigate and prevent the occurrence of bullying in both conventional and online settings, ultimately leading to enhanced psychological and social well-being for all individuals involved (Chen et al., 2022).

Conclusion

Based on the studies and literature that were explored in this study, we can conclude that bullying has devastating effects to the victims. Bullied students face higher risks of having psychological and social problems up until adulthood. Aside from the physical symptoms, it is evident that the students who were bullied suffer from the following but is not limited to; depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts, school avoidance, poor academic performance and eating disorders. Not everyone has the courage to speak up and report being victims of bullying as they feel ashamed and powerless. Drawing from the literature we have studied, a collective effort from schools, parents and the communities is required to address and prevent bullying in schools.

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