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Decrypting The Correlates Of School Bullying And Child Behaviour Problems

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Abstract

Bullying is a multifaceted relationship problem among children, associated with many psychosocial complications for perpetrators and victims. It affects the psychosocial and mental well-being and can disrupt the bullied's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development. Bullying is a problem that begins at an early age and continues into adulthood. Victims of bullying often carry traces of their trauma throughout their lives. If the child is bullied, parents must know the laws passed to combat bullying in India to stifle bullying in the bud. Bullying is one of the forms of violent behaviour among school-going and out-of-school children, which has become a universal phenomenon. Often practised in the absence and in the presence of adult members who do not interfere, bullying has long been considered an inevitable and, in some ways, uncontrollable part of growth. Bullying can affect a school's social environment, creating a climate of fear among students, impairing their learning ability and leading to other antisocial behaviours. Many ways to reduce bullying depend on children who know that what they are doing is called bullying and that this is not an acceptable way to behave because of its consequences for victims and other children. Anti-bullying interventions require a combination of scaffolding and social architecture to provide comprehensive support and change the social dynamics that allow bullying. From an empirical point of view, we could perhaps reduce the burden of these relationship problems in the lives of children and young people. In this paper, we explored the bullying phenomenon and suggested possible interventions to reduce the problem in and outside school settings.

Keywords: Schools, children, bullying,victimisation, aggression, child behaviour problem,

Introduction

The contemporary school system is recognised as a progressive and proactive social organisation that enables pupils to learn important values and ethics for their overall personal development. The Indian family system is undergoing rapid transformation, as evidenced by an increase in the number of nuclear families living fast-paced lives, a general increase in cases of marital discord, teenage pregnancies/abortions, single parenthood, lifestyle diseases, and incidents of alcoholism and drug abuse. As a result of these societal developments, the school system is under more psychological, social, and economic pressure to not only fulfil its mission as an educational institution but also to create a safe environment for students. Children should grow up in a positive, pro-social environment (Anand, 2010).Schools are considered the most significant institution in children's life. It comes after home and family as the base on which children build their future. However, being in schools, children can be protected from myriads of risks and exploitation. Violence is omnipresent now, and hence, our children in school also get affected from the same socially, emotionally and psychologically. In order to save children from the long-lasting impacts of school violence, efforts need to be made to make schoolsfree from such menace. However, at present, school violence is rampant globally and hence, posing serious challenges to the well-being of schoolgoers(UNICEF, 2018).

It was expected that schools would nourish children, provide them learning atmosphere, and promote inclusivity and friendships among children, but contrary to it, the same have become breeding grounds for harmful relationships characterised by exclusion, bullying or aggression. In the preceding two decades, bullying and cyberbullying on the school premises posed serious troubles that need to be addressed immediately (Shariff, 2008). The initial phase in school is the most crucial time for the development of bullying, as it is when children form groups and decide their roles. Savin-Williams (1980) conducted a study and found that children make their group, decide the hierarchy and role-playing in the first three days of their school, and this happens quickly (Menesini&Salmivalli, 2017; Thompson, Arora & Sharp, 2001). Bullying in the school, though, is an older phenomenon; however, it was the 1970s when Dan Olweus started conducting systematic research on bullying and related aspects of it. Olweus framed the questionnaire with the title *Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire* (OBVQ) acknowledgement by scholars across the globe (Koo, 2007, Olweus, 1978, 1993).

The adolescent stage is extremely volatile. The study's findings underscore the difficulties between childhood and adulthood aspirations for this set of young people. These converge at eighteen, highlighting fragility on the one hand and responsibility on the other (Field, Sen, Johnston & Ellis, 2021).The results of the studies conducted on bullying exhibited that it occurs in the absence of supervision by adults (Thompson, Arora & Sharp, 2001). Bullying sites vary, but mostly, it happens inside the classrooms, whenever boys and girls get the opportunity to display their physical strength. Bullying also occurs in big halls where children play or gather to perform some group or after-school activities. At the bullying sites, group members tease one identified student whom they purposefully made isolated from the rest of the class, and these vulnerable students are generally new to the school. The newly admitted and introverted students are considered different by senior and dominant students in the school, who leave no opportunity to bully former students (Campbell, 2005). It has also been found that some bully gangs even carry weapons to exhibit their dominance and give threats to their victims. In such situations, the victims find themselves helpless and face difficulty attending school (Brink, 2018). Against the very notion that students strictly perform bullying, research studies suggest it is sometimes practised by teachers as well. Traditionally, bullying used to be considered normal and, resultantly, has never been accepted as a problematic activity.

However, the situation changed in the decade 1970 when scholars and researchers started perceiving bullying as a public health issue that needed to be explored (Limber &Small, 2003). Bullying at school is a global phenomenon. UNICEF (2018) report reiterates that students from different nations like Cambodia, Viet Nam and Nepal had shared their experiences when they faced bullying behaviour by their colleagues and named their schools unsafe for them. The schoolgoers in India, Peru and Ethiopia also shared that they had to bear the brunt of bullying and considered it the foremost reason for dropping out of their schools (Thompson, Arora & Sharp, 2001). The report pointed out that children with any disability, economical poor background, excluded children, migrants and those who look different from the rest of the class face bullying.Bullying jeopardises the rights of children proposed by the United Nations Convention on Child Rights in 1989 (Menesini&Salmivalli, 2017; UNICEF, 2017).

It is arguedin the study that the majority of the children shared that they were bullied at school by their peer groups both at the primary and secondary levels. Children can be prevented from being bullied and not getting involved in such behaviours at the primary level. At the secondary y level, school counsellors and teachers can counsel students not to bully or get bullied (Thompson, Arora & Sharp, 2001). Various scholars and researchers have stated that bullying is a form of aggression. Roland's (1998) analysis of the relationship between aggression and bullying is useful as it concerns itself with the two main theoretical frameworks developed to explain aggression. Dodge (1991) summarises these as reactive and proactive aggression. Roland points out that it is of great importance, for ethical, theoretical and practical reasons, whether we understand bullying as being proactive (that is, spontaneous or unprovoked, a ‘natural’ expression of the child’s emerging personality) or reactive aggression (that is, aggression in response to something else happening). Each type of aggression has a different set of associated factors, with regard to motivation, reward and feelings engendered on the part of those who bully, as well as indicating a different set of social conditions which permit bullying to happen. The behaviours associated with bullying can be seen from a very early age. However, this can be termed bullying only when children have a certain awareness and

understanding. Some researchers suggest that bullying can be conceptualised as a special form of aggression, which is social (Bjorkqvist, Ekman & Lagerspetz 1982); this means that the relationship between bullying and aggression needs to be examined. Bullying is mostly a proactive form of aggressive behaviour, with concepts such as intention, motivation, punishment and rewards all relevant factors in this complex process. It not only hurts the victim but also restricts the development and life chances of the bully by providing a simple and often effective way of attaining a limited social status in a dependent group of classmates (Arsenio &Lemerise, 2001). The study of dominance provides us with further clues about the motivation and rewards associated with bullying. Finally, the research conducted by Warden and Christie (1997) exemplified that research into how children learn pro-social and moral behaviour is a pertinent attempt to consider how to avoid creating situations in which bullying is rife.

Etymology of Bullying

Surprisingly the word 'bully' used to be considered wise until the 1600s, and the word was once used to stand for someone "excellent". As far as the origin of the term 'bullying' is concerned, the Oxford dictionary mentioned that the term is derived from the *Dutch* word '*boel'* in 1530, which means 'lover, brother' and can be applied to either gender. The word also used to be associated with 'brother' (Sharifff, 2008). British coalminers described co-workers as bullies and thus began associating bullies as 'rowdies' or 'ruffians'. By the late 1800s,bullying began to refer to cowardice, weakness, tyranny and violence. It also began to be associated with gangs: 'A gang of bullies was secretly sent to slit the nose of the offender'. By 1883, to act like a bully was 'to treat in an overbearing manner; to intimidate, overawe' or to 'drive or force by bullying; to frighten into a certain course' (Simpson & Weiner, 1989). The etymology tells much about the problem of recognising bullying. Its transition from general rough-housing to hostile treatment highlights interesting parallels between the historical evolution of the word and bullying in contemporary schools. First, many researchers acknowledge that, until the last twenty years, bullying in schools was widely accepted as an unavoidable part of growing up (Roher, 1997, Tattum, 1997).

What is bullying?

Bullying in childhood is a well-known public health problem around the world. The research has described numerous effects on the health and mental health of victims, bullies and bystanders. Although contemporary consequences studies exist, much is still to be discovered about the impact of childhood bullying on adulthood (Delara, 2019). Intimidation dehumanises and reduces the victim to an object of ridicule and violence, and this usually means that a group that sees itself as the "internal group" throws itself into the group to exclude or hurt those they consider to be part of the "external group". This feeling is reflected in the classrooms and society in general. While bullies find strength in a group, the situation is worrisome when a student is bullied and the classmates make fun of that student. This act is called "passive bullying", when bullies get implicit support from others. Interestingly, those who dehumanise others are those who are most unhappy or most hurt from within. Those who are not at peace with themselves tend to hurt others, and it is this feeling of "insecurity" that drives them to seek "safety" by belittling others (Kumar, 2019).

Singh et al. (2007) defined bullying as verbal aggression or a physical stance intended to intimidate peers. Bullying involves overt or covert behaviour and takes verbal or physical forms. Jokes and teasing in good spirits degenerate into intimidation when the victim (s) and the perpetrator (writers) stop agreeing when the behaviour has to stop and when an imbalance of power is created between them. Lee (2004) has categorically mentioned that bullying is a complex subject that arouses strong emotions and that the language used to describe it reflects the diversity of viewpoints. For some, it is a "scourge" (Pervin&Turner, 1994); others view it as '*The Silent Nightmare*' (Smith, 1991). Otherwise, there are those who, without sanction, ask that we consider it "normal" (Maines &Robinson, 1991). A review of widely accepted prevalence rates of bullying/peer abuse indicates that bullying is an unfortunate reality in a different culture and has been abundant in various educational settings. The short-term and long-term psychological, social, and educational implications for bullies and victims are serious, but educators, parents, and other personalities in a child's life neglect or minimise the problem and make things worse when an intervention takes place late or especially much less frequently than expected (Carney &Merrell, 2001, Craig et al., 2000).

Olweus is credited for launching the world's first research on systematic bullying. He is presumably the first scholar to have researched bullying and

related concepts(Olweus, 1978). Bullying involves a dynamic interaction between the perpetrator and the victim, the bully increases the power, and the victim loses the same, making it difficult for the victim to react or cope with the problem (Swearer & Hymel, 2015). Bullying is a specific type of aggressive behaviour that causes distress or harm and is repeated over time, satisfying bullies but still perpetuating the cycle of bullying(Leff, Power, Costigan, &Manz, 2003). Bullying behaviour is awful; coercive and exclusionary behaviour of the bully children is wrongly assumed to be a part of the normal growth process (Carney & Merrell, 2001, Craig et al., 2000).

Types of Bullying Behaviour

It found that bullying has two forms: physical and psychological (verbal mockery). Verbal intimidation in contemporary schools fluctuates between tenderness and hostile treatment (Shariff, 2008, p. 34). It is stated that the nature of bullying varies from the respondent's point of view. When the children asked, they felt that "shouting naughty names" and "hitting someone" were forms of bullying. In the age of technology, other forms, such as cyberbullying or technological intimidation (bullying was perpetrated through electronic gadgets such as cell phones and computers). Intimidating a person does not require a physical presence; therefore, different types of behaviour fall within the category of bullying(Thompson, Arora & Sharp, 2001;Shariff, 2008).

Below mentioned are some of the types of bullying:

a. Physical bullying:Physical intimidation is more than just punching and kicking and can take indirect forms, including taking the property and damaging property to subjugate the victim, i.e. there is a demonstration of physical bullying but no physical pain. Extortion is included in these forms of intimidation when the threat of violence leads the victim to donate money or property, as well as the threat of violence or gestures and intimidating body language.
b. Verbal bullying: This is one of the most common forms of bullying because it can have an immediate impact, often in front of an audience, with little effort on the author's part. Citing names and making offensive, threatening and insulting remarks are all forms that can take and can be directed against or seek to create vulnerable groups. The advent of bullying by mobile phones and computer provides new ways by which verbal intimidation can be conducted away from the physical presence of the victim (Benson, 2017).
c. Social bullying: This form of bullying includes the deliberate exclusion of social groups or bullying within the group. Like other forms, it can be direct, with exclusion lived by the victim, or indirect, that is to say, executed away from the victim and not lived by her until they are informed or try to join the group.
d. Cyberbullying: Other names are technological bullying and electronic bullying. It involves using a computer means such as the Internet and email to inflict harm on others (Hinduja &Patchin, 2012). With easy access to the Internet and the affordability of new technologies, bullies can now harass their victims in many ways. The current generation has the added ability to use technology to extend its reach and the scale of its attacks exponentially (Schargel, 2014).
e. Communal Bullying: Erum (2017) conducted a study in which “bullying in the community" has become another form of bullying in schools. In the study, it was found that children belonging to a minority faced insults and mockery based on religion. Children under ten have been bullied because of their religious identity in schools in India's national capital.

Prevalence of School Bullying

School Bullying is not a recent development (Tiwari, 2022).Although the issue of bullying is not taken seriously and is often ignored in India due to a lack of awareness of its toxic effects on an individual's emotional and psychological health, this does not mean that the institutes of education in India are free (Youth ki Awaaz, 2018). The Teachers Foundation conducted a survey in association with Wipro in 15 different cities, including Bengaluru, Shivaamogga, Mumbai, Chennai, Bhopal, Guwahati and nine other Indian cities, in which forty-two per cent of students surveyed from classes 4 to 8 and thirty-six per cent of students in grades 9 to 12 reported being bullied. The survey yielded another result; sixty-nine per cent of students in grades 4 to 8 admitted having had difficulty working with similar students in terms of dress and mannerisms (Gyanesh, 2017). Another dimension has been added asschool bullying covered up under communal flare in India has been reported. It has been categorically mentioned that Muslim children are increasingly targeted in schools

because of their religious identity due to growing Islamophobia in India and worldwide.

Erum (2017) conducted a study and interviewed145 families from 12 cities and 100 children studying in 25 elite schools in Delhi. Findings of the study suggest that children as young as five are abused by their colleagues because of their religious identity. The author, while visiting schools for the book, came across reports of Muslim students being bullied in many of the nation's top schools, of kids being hit and called names because of their religion, religious segregation in classrooms, and of the worries of minority parents (specifically Muslims) who worry about the clothes their children wear, the names that are given to them, and the way that they act in public in order to shield their kids from the dominant majoritarian gaze that is pervasive in society. The author embarked on a journey that unites the suffering and trauma experienced by hundreds of regular kids and parents from all over the nation who are still subjected to "Islamic terror" taunts, are viewed as foreign enemies in their own country, are lynched for the food they consume, and are killed because they happen to be Muslims. The author documents incidents of school bullying based on religious identity and segregation of students in schools that pride themselves on being progressive and modern and are located right in the middle of India's metropolitan cities in India (Pathak, 2019). Though school bullying was about intimidating and "othering" someone who does not seem "normal" to bullies, it is now perhaps more individualised, aggressive, and nasty than ever before as viewed by counsellors, psychologists, and education specialists who have worked with schools (Tiwari, 2022).

Legal Measures for School Bullying

Anti-Bullying Committees: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) ordered setting up Anti-Bullying Committees in 2015 by issuing guidelines for deterring bullying and ragging in schools. Various methods to deal with this menace were proposed, including issuing written and oral warnings, and for exceptional cases, measures like rustication/expulsion of the bullies can also be taken.

UGC Circular: The UGC issued an anti-ragging notification in 2009 to check the brutal ragging faced by college students. The notification exhaustively defines ragging and calls for setting up Anti-Ragging Squads and engaging trained counsellors, among other measures. Since this notification, ragging in colleges has been better regulated; however, it has not completely ended.

Relevant Sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC): It is reported that most college students who get engaged in ragging junior colleagues are above 18 years. It means they are capable of committing criminal acts and, therefore, can be treated under the criminal justice system meant for adults. Hence, they can be booked under various sections of the IPC, depending on the result of their bullying. Some of the sections of the IPC cover up the perpetrators who may be found guilty under Section 506 (Punishment for criminal intimidation), Section 323 and 326 (causing grievous hurt and the punishments for the same). In such cases wherein the bullying or ragging act results in the death of the victim, then sections of the IPC dealing with culpable homicide (S. 304) and abetment of suicide (S. 306) can be applied (Mazumdar, 2015). Technological advancements, though beneficial for the most part, have also increased the reach of bullies to a great extent. While earlier, children escaped from their bullies at the end of the school day, bullying continues on social networking sites nowadays. It means that there is no respite for many children. The following laws have been directed at cyber-bullies;

Cyberbullying among school children: The CBSE circular also recognises cyberbullying as a form of bullying in schools, and the methods mentioned in the circular to curb bullying also apply to cyberbullying.

Indian Penal Code (IPC): Sections 506 and 507 of the IPC, which deal with criminal intimidation, may apply to cyber-bullies, depending on whether the bully is acting anonymously (Philip & Philip, 2017.)

So far as intervention is concerned, *School-Wide Positive Behaviour Intervention and Supports Systems* (SW-PBIS) also may impact friendships by facilitating an environment that promotes pro-social behaviour and decreases challenging and bullying behaviour. SW-PBIS requires a commitment from the entire school to promote a multi-tiered system of support (Dunlap, Kincaid, Horner, Knoster, & Bradshaw, 2014). Ttofi&Farrington (2011) studied the effective ingredients of bullying prevention programs. Based on the evaluation of programs, they concluded that the intensity (such as number of hours) and duration (number of days/months) of the programs were related to their effectiveness. It suggests that programs should be long and intensive enough to have desirable outcomes. They also identified two additional elements related to the program's effectiveness: parent training, parent meetings and disciplinary methods

(referring to sanctions in a warm environment). There are differences between schools and teachers regarding how they implement prevention programs. Even programs designed to be intensive can be implemented more or less intensively, depending on the resources and commitment of the schools.In addition, teachers could adopt programs and modify certain critical parts; in other words, they may decide not to implement the program as it was designed. There is evidence that greater fidelity during implementation is associated with better outcomes, such as a greater reduction in student bullying (Punj, n.d.).

Suggestions to prevent school bullying

Programs to prevent bullying throughout the school are often successful. Their effects vary, however; some programs have consistent positive effects, while others have little or no evidence of effectiveness. Bullying prevention programs must be intensive and sustainable, and carried out with conviction and commitment. The involvement of parents seems to reinforce the effects, as well as the use of disciplinary practices with bullies. Educating students about the role of the whole group impact the maintenance of bullying, and it is crucial to improve bullying standards and responses in the classroom. It is also very important for teachers to communicate their anti-bullying attitudes to students, as teaching is one of the ways to solve the problem of bullying. It fulfils three main functions: planning, instruction and evaluation. The teacher must be effective in all these areas to make learning a joyous experience for the child and to make teaching a satisfying experience.The findings of a study by Patra (2006) found a close relationship between teacher effectiveness and emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence factors such as self-awareness, commitment, altruistic behaviour, empathy, personal motivation, and orientation to the following values are more related to teacher effectiveness.

As Pepler (2006) found in anti-bullying interventions, social architecture can essentially reorganise the structures of groups of children in three ways. First, it can separate the bullied child from the victim and peers who reinforce the intimidating behaviour with attention and adherence. Once separated, these children need supportive scaffolding to develop interpersonal relationships rather than exclusionary discipline that may foster hostility and frustration. Some bullies have strong motivations for status and leadership; it is possible to turn the negative leadership demonstrated by bullying into positive leadership. Second, social architecture can be used to integrate child victims of violence in a positive peer-to-peer context. These children often become isolated as a result of their victimisation. When organising children in groups, for example, for a group project at school, teachers often ask children to choose class members for the workgroups. Inadvertently, they have created a situation of victimisation, as it is unlikely that a marginalised child will be selected and more likely to be actively rejected during a public humiliation event. This example highlights the need for adults to become aware of children's social dynamics and ensure the inclusion of marginalised children in a constructive, positive and positive context. The third process of social architecture is to promote a generally positive, respectful, tolerant and supportive climate within a social group. In the name of intervention in Finland, Salmivalli focused on extending peer support for victimised children (Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, Voeten&Sinisammal, 2004).

Until now, bullying at school is concerned; this is a workable goal in which efforts must be made to optimise student learning and a positive school experience (Carney & Merrell, 2001, Craig et al., 2000, Sharp et al., 2000) while discouraging students. Bullying school culture by punishing offenders and school staff should promote healthy communication. Teachers should encourage students to discuss the threat of bullying and report if a person is practising at school. Efforts can be made to develop students' self-esteem. Bullying could affect self-esteem and self-esteem. People with low self-esteem do not see themselves as worthy of results, they are less motivated, and the hardest hit is those who are bullied because they believe in their bullying behaviour. On the other hand, the social climate has improved, and relations with the family and schools have been put in place to contribute to the well-being of children. Children benefiting from positive initiatives such as "life skills training", regular education, life skills training and child-friendly school development reduce bullying (Manikam, 2002).

Conclusion

Bullying is a problem that begins at an early age and continues into adulthood. Victims of bullying often carry traces of their trauma throughout their lives. If the child is bullied, parents must know the laws passed to combat bullying in India to stifle bullying in the bud. Ericson (2001) found that bullying is one of the forms of violent behaviour

of school-going and out-of-school children, which has become a universal phenomenon. Often practised in the absence and in the presence of adult members who do not interfere, bullying has long been considered an inevitable and, in some ways, uncontrollable part of growth. Bullying can affect a school's social environment, creating a climate of fear among students, impairing their learning ability and leading to other antisocial behaviours. Many ways to reduce bullying depend on children who know that what they are doing is called bullying and that this is not an acceptable way to behave because of its consequences for victims and other children.Pepler (2006) indicates that anti-bullying interventions require a combination of scaffolding and social architecture to provide comprehensive support and change the social dynamics that allow bullying. From an empirical point of view, we could perhaps reduce the burden of these relationship problems in the lives of children and young people. He emphasised the need to refine interventions by researching the developmental profiles of children and victims of bullying and their relationships. Ultimately, parents can play an important role in protecting their children from harassment by frequently visiting educational institutions, meeting with teachers, and providing space for them to discuss what they contradict at school openly. Parents know their children better than anyone and, therefore, must choose the best strategies for their child and family. Their involvement in a bullying prevention program at their child's school is essential. They should not hesitate to express their interest in helping the school set up one or more bullying prevention programs.

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