

Bullying as a Menace among Adolescents

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to study bullying in its varied forms, the psyche of the bullies, their personality traits, their motives and the other major factors inducing bullying. Nowadays, the term 'bullying' has become a fashionable and describable term commonly used by the school and college goers, parents, teachers and educational administrators most often without perceiving the seriousness and intensity of the problem involved with the term. What most often starts as bullying intensifies in course of time resulting in very serious tendencies resulting in danger to the person cornered. Bullying behaviour is commonly found among adolescents at their secondary and higher secondary level in various forms such as intimidation, mistreatment, oppression, harassment, victimisation, maltreatment, hounding, discrimination etc., and sometimes among the college goers in the form of ragging, stalking, prejudice, dominance etc., In this study, a sample of around 518 students in their adolescence studying at the secondary and higher secondary levels were identified based on their bully behaviour. Students who were being bullied were also identified and taken as samples. Around 64 teachers were met during the process of this study and an unstructured questionnaire was administered to them in order to analyse their adequacy of knowledge regarding the bullying behaviour of students, around 40 per cent of the teachers were found to have adequate knowledge of the bullying behaviour of students. From the study it was observed that on an average around 7 per cent to 10 per cent of students who belong to the peer group— non-achieving, physically dominant individuals involve in serious bully behaviours. The other aspect of this paper concentrates on the one's who are being bullied; from the analysis it was found that around 4.5 per cent to 9 per cent of students who are physically weak, shy natured, children lacking social exposure suffer from bullies. In few cases, the parents

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of the bullies and bullied were also been met by the researcher in order to understand the background of the children involved in bullying. Research studies by Ludwig (2006) indicate the reasons why an individual turns to be a bully citing reasons ranging from family background, sibling behaviour, obsessive tendencies, deviation from normal behaviour etc. Some studies by Smith (2000), Owens, Shute and Slee (2000) indicate mild to severe mental conditions, psychological affects like internal conflict, mental health, parenting styles, personal deviant behaviours as likely causes for why an individual turns to be a bully.

INTRODUCTION

Bullying behaviour may be defined as an intentional activity aimed to intimidate, coax, threaten or even groom an individual in order to use them as an object of reception of force, coercion and dominance usually ends up with one individual being a bully, who is always at the powers end dominate and the other individual who is at the receiving end is the one who is bullied and is generally at the sufferers end. Olweus (2001) a pioneer in the research on bullying defined it as, 'a subcategory of interpersonal aggression characterised by intentionality, repetition, and an imbalance of power, with abuse of power being a primary distinction between bullying and other forms of aggression'. A child who is being bullied always have a hard time to defend. The term of being bullied varies based on the forms of intimidation. Some exists a momentary condition for a while, some for days and severe forms may hold itself for days, weeks, months and years. Often, children are bullied not just once or twice but repeatedly

(Olweus, 1993; Roland, 1989; Smith & Sharp, 1994). This study is aimed at studying the bullying behaviour among adolescents studying at the secondary and higher secondary levels in selected schools of Chennai, Thiruvallur and Kancheepuram districts.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

In the recent times there, is an increase in the reports regarding the bullying behaviour among school going adolescents. It can further be noted that widespread incidents including the many forms of bullying behaviour such as intimidation, mistreatment among peers, oppressive behaviour among the dominant children, harassment, victimisation, maltreatment, hounding, discrimination, prejudice, dominance, teasing, grooming, stalking, kidding, coaxing etc., are found to be common among school going adolescents especially at the secondary and higher secondary levels.

The bullying behaviour when left unnoted and uninstructed about the causes turns out to pose serious problems both for the bully and the

bullied. Apart from this bullying behaviour of adolescents over the peers, the other concerns include the extension of this behaviour over their teachers who complain of being bullied, harassed and victimised. Hence, the present study is carried out with a concern to find out the various causal factors of this behaviour, to find remedy and to curb this bullying behaviour at the early stages.

MAJOR AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Considering the previous research findings based on the review of related literature from the standard and documentary sources including wide range of newspaper articles it is felt to study the various causes of bullying behaviour and its affect in different contexts. The present study is aimed to investigate the factorial structure of bullying mainly in the schooling, peer relationship and parenting style context. It is intended to study the following—

- (i) bullying behaviour among school going adolescents;
- (ii) various forms of bullying behaviour among adolescents at the secondary and higher secondary level;
- (iii) emotional impact of bullying behaviour on the bullied;
- (iv) ways in which this bullying behaviour can be handled effectively and counselled;

SAMPLE

A sample of around 518 students at their adolescence studying at the secondary and higher secondary levels were identified based on their bully behaviour and students who were being bullied were also identified and taken as samples. A thorough sampling identification process was done with the selected schools in Chennai, Thiruvallur and Kancheepuram districts. The samples were chosen from around 22 schools. The samples were stratified based on the bullying behaviour as reported by their teachers. Stratification of the sample was carried out through focus discussion and interview. Multi-stage sampling framework was applied at certain levels of the study with informal interviews being carried out with bullies and the bullied.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

H:1 Bullying behaviour holds emotional impact on the adolescent children studying at the secondary and higher secondary level.

H:2 Bullied adolescent children suffer emotional impact.

H:3 Bullying behaviour when left unnoted and uninstructed turns out to pose serious problems both for the bully and the bullied.

H:4 Bullying behaviour of adolescents affect teachers

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

Focus group interviews and discussions with the samples and

teachers were done at the primary stages and a representational tool indicative of the bullying behaviour with dimensions namely intimidation (12 items), peer mistreatment (12 items), oppression (9 items), harassment (9 items), discrimination (10 items) and victimisation (10 items) with 62 items were administered to the sample identified and stratified for their bullying behaviour. Subjects rated their response to each item of the bullying behaviour scale on a 4 point scale that ranged from 4 (Always) to 1(Never). Cronbach's alpha was calculated as a function of the number of test items and the average inter-correlation among the items of the tool indicative of the bullying behaviour. The alpha coefficient for the items of the bullying behaviour tool was found to be .641, suggesting

that the items have relatively high internal consistency. The validity of the tool was found to be 0.800.

Table 1 represents the sample selection and distribution, wherein around 518 students at their adolescence were selected as samples for the present study. Around 303 students studying at the secondary level and 215 students at the higher secondary level were selected as samples for the present study among which 234 are girls and 284 are boys. Further, 193 students were selected from the rural locality and 325 representing the urban locality were selected. 244 students studying at the government and government aided school were selected and 274 students studying in the private schools.

Data Analysis and statistical Interpretations

Table: 1
Sample selection and distribution

Schooling level	Classes	N	Gender		Locality		Type of school	
			Girls	Boys	Rural	Urban	Govt.	Pvt.
Secondary level	VIII	85	33	52	40	45	45	40
	IX	106	46	60	29	77	55	51
	X	112	72	40	40	72	49	63
Higher Secondary level	XI	125	53	72	45	80	54	71
	XII	90	30	60	40	51	41	49
Total	518	234	284	193	325	244	274	

Table 2
Mean and S.D scores indicative of the bullying behaviour

Sample	Subgroup	N	%	Mean	S.D.	t-value	Level of significance
Gender	Boys	284	54.82	64.12	14.22	6.308**	0.01
	Girls	234	45.17	57.07	11.21		
Type of school	Govt. / Govt. aided	244	47.10	56.59	10.59	11.308**	0.01
	Private	274	52.89	68.70	12.68		
Locality	Rural	193	37.25	49.88	9.51	10.848**	0.01
	Urban	325	62.74	61.201	14.20		
Medium of Instruction	English	317	55.79	55.64	10.63	1.019	N.S
	Tamil	201	44.20	56.73	12.57		
Stream at Higher Secondary Level	Science	97	45.11	52.39	11.99	2.468*	0.05
	Arts	118	54.88	56.66	13.35		
Knowledge of teacher about Bullying	Adequate	29	45.31	52.18	11.80	5.727**	0.01
	Inadequate	35	54.68	58.71	14.03		
Teachers complaining of Bullying	Male	24	37.50	49.52	11.13	9.811**	0.01
	Female	40	62.50	62.31	15.41		
Parental qualification	Graduate level	289	44.20	55.12	11.88	2.587**	0.01
	School level	229	55.79	58.20	15.25		
Parental Monthly income	>20 K	312	60.23	63.37	16.08	8.875**	0.01
	< 20 K	206	39.76	52.21	12.45		

* represents significance at 0.05 level,

** represents significance at 0.01 level

N.S. – Not significant

- Analysis of Table 2 represents the t values of bullying behaviour based on the subgroups of the sample.
- There exists a significant effect for the subgroup of the sample 'gender', , $t(516) = 6.308$, $p < .01$, with boys scores (M = 64.12, SD = 14.22) indicative of bullying behaviour is higher than that of girls (M = 57.07, 11.21).
- Further, results indicate a significant difference among government, government aided school (M = 56.59, SD = 10.59)

when compared with the private schools the t-value being ($M = 68.70$, $SD = 12.68$), $t(516) = 11.308$, $p < .01$, where private school students show considerably more bullying behaviour when compared to their counterparts.

- Urban students are found to be with more bullying behaviour ($M = 61.201$, $SD = 14.20$) when compared with the rural students ($M = 49.88$, $SD = 9.51$) the t-value being $t(516) = 10.848$, $p < .01$.
- No significant difference was observed between the English and Tamil medium students in their bullying behaviour.
- Students studying in the 'arts' stream ($M = 56.66$, $SD = 13.35$) were found to be with more bullying behaviour when compared with the 'science' stream students ($M = 52.39$, $SD = 11.99$) at the higher secondary level, $t(213) = 2.468$, $p < .05$.
- Teachers with inadequate knowledge about bullying behaviour ($M = 58.71$, $SD = 14.03$) report more harassment by the bullies when compared to the teachers who have adequate knowledge ($M = 52.18$, $SD = 11.80$) about bullying behaviour, $t(62) = 5.727$, $p < .01$.
- Female teachers ($M = 62.31$, $SD = 15.41$) have complained more about the bullying of the students when compared with that of the male teachers ($M = 49.52$, $SD = 11.13$), $t(62) = 9.811$, $p < .01$.
- Children of parents' who have received their education till their graduation ($M = 55.12$, $SD = 11.88$) show less bullying behaviour when compared with the children of parents' whose education is at the school level ($M = 58.20$, $SD = 15.25$), $t(516) = 2.587$, $p < .01$.
- Children of parents' whose monthly earning is greater ($M = 63.37$, $SD = 16.08$) show more bullying behaviour than their counterparts ($M = 52.21$, $SD = 12.45$), $t(516)$, $p < .01$.

Table 3
Standard-wise distribution of
Mean and S.D scores indicative of the bullying behaviour

Level of Schooling	Classes	N	%	Mean	S.D	t-value	Level of sig.
Secondary level	VIII (VIII&IX)	85	28.05	54.32	10.38	5.854**	0.01
	IX (IX & X)	106	34.98	64.06	12.61	2.526*	0.01
	X(X & VIII)	112	27.06	59.87	11.83	3.498**	0.01
Higher Secondary level	XI	125	58.13	59.69	13.62	4.477**	0.01
	XII	90	41.96	51.83	11.99		

* represents significance at 0.05 level

** represents significance at 0.01 level

N.S. – Not significant

Analysis of Table 3 indicates the standardwise distribution of mean and standard deviation scores indicative of the bullying behaviour. Comparative t value among the standards VIII and IX, IX and X and X and VIII standards was calculated among the three standards namely VIII, IX and X standards and inference was drawn from the results based on the t-value. With regard to the analysis of bullying behaviour made between the secondary level students the following readings were observed,

- Students studying at the IX standard show more bullying behaviour (M = 64.06, SD = 12.61) than the VIII standard students (M = 54.32, SD = 10.38), $t(189)$, $p < .01$.
- Students studying at the IX standard show more bullying

behaviour (M = 64.06, SD = 12.61) than the X standard students (M = 59.87, SD = 11.83), $t(216)$, $p < .05$.

- Students studying at the X standard students standard show more bullying behaviour (M = 59.87, SD = 11.83) than the VIII standard students (M = 54.32, SD = 10.38), $t(195)$, $p < .01$.

With regard to the analysis of bullying behaviour made among the higher secondary level students the following readings were observed:

- Students studying at the XI standard show more bullying behaviour (M = 59.69, SD = 13.62) when compared with the students studying at the XII standard level (M = 51.83, SD = 11.99), $t(213)$, $p < 0.1$.

Table 4
Inter-correlation among the factors of bullying behaviour

S.No.	Factors	r-value	Level of significance
1	Intimidation	0.184**	0.01
2	Peer mistreatment	0.093*	0.05
3	Oppression	0.080*	0.05
4	Harassment	0.064	N.S
5	Discrimination	0.211**	0.01
6	Victimization	0.173**	0.01

Note: N=518, df=N-2.

* represents significance at 0.05 level

** represents significance at 0.01 level

N.S. – Not significant

Table 4 indicates the inter-correlation among the factors of bullying behaviour of high school and higher secondary level students. The

factors of bullying behaviour namely 'intimidation', 'peer mistreatment', 'oppression', 'discrimination' and 'victimisation' show that each of the

factors were strongly correlated with the other factors $r(516) = 0.184, 0.093, 0.080, 0.211, 0.173, p < .01$. The factor namely 'harassment' does not hold any significant correlation with other factors.

ANALYTICAL DISCUSSIONS, INTERPRETATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the data analysis of the present study made with reference to the bullying behaviour of students studying at the high school and higher secondary level it can be interpreted that—

- 12 per cent of the students studying at the high school and higher secondary level were either directly or indirectly involved in bullying, causing problems ranging between mild to serious to their victims.
- Boys are found to involve themselves more in bullying behaviour when compared with that of girls (Menesini, 2017), the reason for this may probably be the time they spend on socialising with their peers and their exposure to different environments like peer friendships, exposure to inappropriate media, misdirection etc. taking into our social context. It may be interpreted that girls have limited scopes of socialisation and the time they spend outside home and school environments are comparatively much lesser than the boys.
- Type of school and locality play a significant role in the bullying behaviour of students, as from the data of the present study it was noted that students studying in the private schools and in few locality based government schools involve in bullying behaviour.
- 19 per cent of the urban students were found to involve in more bullying activities than their rural counterparts, the reason for these may be attributed to their exposure, less monitoring or control by the parents in the busy urban life, their 'mean friendships'.
- Students may be encouraged to be attached with their parents and to be more communicative with their parents. In turn, parents too must be educated of how their interaction could possibly create positive attitude in their children and help stop their bully behaviours.
- In the present study, it was noted that students at the higher secondary level who are studying in the 'arts' stream show comparatively more bullying behaviour when compared with the students studying in the 'science' stream. This may be probably due to the work orientation, subject demands, that keeps the science students busy and they may not find time to get indulged in bullying activities. Proper goal orientation, value education programmes,

study skill orientation may help students who involve in bullying.

- Children of parents' who have received their education till their graduation show less bullying behaviour, this shows that parental awareness towards bullying, timely advices and intervention, monitoring of their children's behaviour play a vital role in lessening the bullying behaviour of their wards.

Teacher awareness towards bullying helps in identifying the bullying behaviour of their students at the right time and knowledge of teachers about the nature and cause of bullying helps the teacher to secure and extend advice, support and intervention to the students who involve in bullying.

Socialisation process including family intervention, enhancing teacher student relationship, enhancing peer interaction is one best way to help prevent bullying.

CONCLUSION

In the present day context, bullying behaviour among adolescents is a problem of serious concern. Wide reviews carried out in the area chosen for the study show that problems

related to bullying are frequently been reported as incidents in school, online environments and among with peer groups. Much of these reviews and the study made in these lines show that a considerable number of bullying behaviour expressed by the students studying at the high school and higher secondary level is on the rise. The major dimension of their bullying behaviour extends from the primary bully behaviours such as kidding, coaxing, teasing, domination and these behaviour after a point of time extends to serious forms of bullying behaviours such as intimidation, mistreatment, oppression, harassment, stalking, victimisation, maltreatment, discrimination etc., Further, from the present study it was noted that teachers complain of frequent harassment by the bullying behaviour of students studying at the higher secondary level. Students may be encouraged to report or to speak out the issues to teachers or to the parent, wherein timely intervention may help prevent bullying. It may be concluded that awareness, reassurance, socialisation, intervention, family involvement and orientation in this area will bring in a positive change in the individuals who get involved in this behaviour.

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