



## BULLYING IN SCHOOLS: THE STATE OF KNOWLEDGE AND EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8049423>

### ARTICLE INFO

Qabul qilindi: 12-June 2023 yil

Ma'qullandi: 15-June 2023 yil

Nashr qilindi: 17-June 2023 yil

### KEY WORDS

*Bullying; adolescents;  
antibullying intervention;  
children; violence in school.*

### ABSTRACT

*During the school years, bullying is one of the most common expressions of violence in the peer context. Research on bullying started more than forty years ago, when the phenomenon was defined as 'aggressive, intentional acts carried out by a group or an individual repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him- or herself'. Three criteria are relevant in order to define aggressive behaviour as bullying: (1) repetition, (2) intentionality and (3) an imbalance of power. Given these characteristics, bullying is often defined as systematic abuse of power by peers. It is recognised globally as a complex and serious problem. In the present paper, we discuss the prevalence, age and gender differences, and various types of bullying, as well as why it happens and how long it lasts, starting from the large surveys carried out in western countries and to a lower extent in low- and middle-income countries. The prevalence rates vary widely across studies; therefore, specific attention will be devoted to the definition, time reference period and frequency criterion. We will also focus on risk factors as well as short- and long-term outcomes of bullying and victimisation. Finally, a section will be dedicated to review what is known about effective prevention of bullying*

Bullying is when someone says or does things to have power over another person, making that person feel afraid, upset, or uncomfortable. It is unwanted aggressive behaviour, generally repeated. It includes name calling, put downs, practical jokes, saying and writing nasty things, sexual comments, excluding or ignoring others, threats, damaging property, physical abuse and forcing others to do things which they do not want to do.

Bullying can happen at school or through the internet (cyber-bullying). Cyberbullying is becoming more commonplace as most students have access to the internet. This means that bullying can extend to outside of school, after school hours, even when you are not physically near the bullies.

Everyone reacts to bullying in different ways. You may feel sad, angry, anxious, uncomfortable, worried, or scared if you're being bullied. You may have difficulty sleeping, may not feel like eating, or hanging out with your friends. You may even feel that you no longer want to go to school anymore.

The Ministry of Education has made guidelines for schools about how bullying at school should be prevented and stopped. The Ministry has recommended that every school have policies about how to prevent bullying, how complaints about bullying should be made, and how bullying should be stopped.

You should look online to see if your school has a policy about how complaints should be made about bullying. If you can't find a policy, you can ask the school office if there is a policy. If one exists, you should follow the complaint process in that policy.

If your school does not have a policy, you could start the complaint process by telling your teacher about the bullying. Usually, the teacher will talk to you and the bully to find out what happened. In serious cases, they might refer the matter to the principal, who has the power to take further actions.

If you feel uncomfortable talking to a teacher, you could talk to a guidance counsellor or ask your parents/caregivers to talk to the school for you.

When you talk to your teacher or school counsellor, they may tell someone else if necessary, even if you ask them not to. For example, if they think it is important for your overall well-being and safety, they may report the matter to Oranga Tamariki or the Police.

Many counsellors have agreed to a professional code of ethics that says that they will not breach your confidentiality unless you or others are in clear and immediate danger. If you're concerned, you should ask them what information they'll keep private at the beginning of the meeting.

If you complain to a teacher, depending on the school's policy on bullying, they may talk to and discipline the bullies if they think you've been bullied.

Many schools try to resolve bullying in a restorative way. For example, the school may try to arrange a meeting between you and the bully to talk about what has happened.

Bullying occurs when an individual (or a group of people) repeatedly and intentionally cause harm to another person (or group of people), who is unable to avoid being targeted.

Bullying can include:

Physical bullying (hitting, tripping, damaging property) Verbal bullying (insults, teasing, intimidation)

Social bullying (lying, spreading rumours, excluding, damaging someone's social reputation) Cyberbullying (hurtful texts, posts, images or videos, imitating others online). Social bullying and cyberbullying can be considered 'invisible' or covert forms of bullying, as they are particularly difficult for teachers and parents to detect and address. As students get older, they are increasingly likely to bully others using these covert behaviours.

The risk of being cyberbullied increases with age and is most likely to occur in high school. Cyberbullying is particularly upsetting for young people, because it can occur in any time or place, be witnessed by a wide audience, and the perpetrator can hide their identity.

All forms of bullying can have serious consequences for the person targeted, for the person who learns to bully others to achieve their goals, and for those who witness the bullying. Bullying involvement is associated with feelings of being unsafe, poor relationships

and social support, poor academic outcomes, and an increased risk of depression and other mental health issues.

Friends (64%) followed by parents or guardians (57%) and then teachers and other staff members (46%) are the people students most commonly turn to for help if they are bullied. Boys (33%) are more likely than girls (23%) to not ask anyone for help.

Telltale signs of being bullied can include: Changes in sleeping and eating patterns,

Frequent tears or anger

Feeling ill in the morning and not wanting to go to school Changing friendship groups and

Unexplained bruises, cuts and scratches.

It is important for parents to monitor their children's online and offline activities and social interactions, and encourage their child to talk about any troubling experiences. If bullying has occurred, parents must be careful not to react with anger or take action without consulting their child. Young people often hide bullying from parents because they fear the parent will make things worse.

Schools and parents should also encourage students to be positive bystanders in online and offline settings. Those who witness bullying can help the person being targeted by standing up for them, telling a teacher or other adult, or by comforting them later. Students should be aware that they are contributing to bullying behaviour if they encourage the perpetrator or watch without taking action

Bullying is one of the main challenges children are facing at schools. It is a global problem that is currently affecting many youth. The rate at which bullying cases are reported makes a lot of worries to parents. The issue is serious to the extent that many children have learnt to live with it and some have created the notion that bullying is part of their life in the early years of their development. Several cases, especially in the United States and Japan, have been reported about children humiliation, mistreatments, physical attacks, and even rape cases of young female learners.

The effects of bullying to a child can be very traumatizing if not carefully addressed. These effects sometimes are long lasting and can provoke the victim to take dangerous measures to forget the incidences. According to Rigby (64), bullying experiences can cost lives to the victims, if not prevented in time. In New York it is reported that a young immigrant killed herself due to excessive bullying. This researcher argues that it is high time for the issue of bullying in schools to be addressed. The notion that bullying is a rite of passage should be eliminated. This research paper aims at exploring the causes, effects, and the possible solutions to bullying in schools.

According to Olweus (34), there are many reasons that lead to bullying in schools. One of the main causes is the cultural factor. This includes race and ethnicity. A child may be a bully or a victim if he or she comes from a majority race or the minority race respectively. Another cause of bullying in schools is the nature of life a child is exposed to. In many families in the developed countries, children are comfortably allowed to watch TV even in their bedrooms. Instead of studying, such children spend their time playing computer games. The games they play make them bullies because they see others practice the same.

According to Tattumand Lane (27), high expectations of parents on their children contribute to bullying. This is the case because a child will spend a lot of time studying so as to

perform well and meet the parents' expectations. Failure to achieve the target may develop stress in a child and they will express anger through shouting or bullying fellow learners. Another cause of bullying in schools emanates from the social status of the family. A child from a humble background will always have some pressurizing needs that are not met. This child will always want to express this frustration to the fellow learners, especially those coming from stable families by bullying them.

The effects of bullying as mentioned above can be very traumatizing. Victims of bullying may opt for dropping out of school because of the trauma they experience while at school. Others may develop irresponsible behavior that involves missing classes in most of the occasions. School irregularities among the learners result in poor performance. Bullying leads to stress among the victims. This in turn results into poor communication with these children. McGrath (44) argues that, in some cases, excessive bullying can lead to victims committing suicide to escape from the painful experiences and memories. Some of the effects are short term, but if not well addressed, they can result into serious complications. The victims may have bed-wetting problems, unexplained worries, and digestive problems because of the fear that is instilled in them. Some victims with the intention of hitting back may develop very destructive behavior. Other victims may end up engaging in drug abuse to make them forget the painful experiences. Bullying affects the normal development of victims and makes them have low self-esteem

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