

Bullies and Victims: A Review of The Bullying in Indian Schools

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Abstract

In India School bullying is more prevalent than the awareness in general population about it. The consequences of bullying have been evident in ever increasing number of suicide death of young students in cities all over the country. The school, principal and administrators agree to the problem exists but they do not admit the levels and widespread proportions of the issue. Their stance is mainly based on the reasoning that certain acts like teasing, having fun does not constitute bullying.

Key Words: Legal action, Intentional, aggressive, diverse socioeconomic, Imbalance of power

INTRODUCTION:

Bullying has been a part of the schooling process and it is an even serious concern now as its intensity is on the rise. Despite the seemingly ubiquitous nature of the problem of school bullying worldwide, much of what is commonly known about the issue stems from research conducted in Western countries (Horton, Lindholm&Nyugen, 2015). And while there are researches in other contexts and cultures, the basis of these remains the definitions that are widely developed and used in the western context. On the other hand, the population in our schools is not homogenous but heterogeneous and sometimes these differences are taken up as a reason to bully the other one by use of verbal and physical means. While this diversity needs to be celebrated, at times the case is not so.

The scope of bullying has increased manifold in the last few years with students from varied socio-economic backgrounds interacting with each other. A student could be bullied for not carrying a particular kind of mobile phone or putting up a picture on a social networking website (Joshi &Pushkarna, 2014). Not only this, the teachers and other adults of the schools also engage in such behaviors that demean the child's identity. Such interactions are reflective of the stereotypes held by them (students, teachers and other adults) towards the child based on their homes and the milieu they live in (Dalal, 2015).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

Keeping the above picture in mind an attempt has been made to

- (i) To explore causes of bullying in schools.

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- (ii) To suggest measures to prevent bullying.
- (iii) To explore school's role in prevention of bullying.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION:

This paper is solely based on secondary information collected from different sources like books, journals, reports of various organizations, NGO, articles from newspapers.

What and Why of bullying behavior?

For many years, bullying has remained a part of the school culture. Students have always been engaged in behaviors such as teasing, harassing, name calling and even serious bullying in their schools. Whether or not acceptable, but a number of teachers, parents, and administrators have experienced this in varied capacities. And to many, this has been simply the way things are, a natural course of events, human nature, unchangeable (Rigby, 2007). Bullying has remained a concern in the west with research in this field starting as early as in the 1970s by Dan Olweus who is considered the pioneer in bullying research (Neupane, 2014). Over the last few years, we have been constantly witnessing a mention of such bullying episodes happening in schools through the medium of news, features and newspapers. Still, it is difficult to gauge the exact number of school children being affected as there are no such statistics available. However the counselors in school agree to the humongous problem it is and the severity of its consequences. They blame the cause of the widespread problem to inadequacy of action taken against the culprit is found guilty to act as deterrent so that they do not repeat it again. The matter of concern is the magnitude of the problem. The sensitivity of the problem increases manifold as the authorities choose to keep quiet about the same and negotiate it at their level instead of taking strict legal action against the perpetrators.

Bullying manifests in various forms which are verbal, physical and social bullying and the most recent to be added to this list is cyber bullying. Bullying is an evil whose consequences range from bunking school to serious depression issues and even suicidal ideations. Research indicates that the harm inflicted by bullying, whether physical or psychological, has many implications and can result in a snowball effect of lasting painful emotions and negative impacts (Donegan, 2012). It may also affect the identity formation of the child as they develop a negative self-concept of themselves owing to repeated bullying episodes.

It is a common notion in most of the works cited that a child becomes a victim to bullying as he/she is vulnerable or belongs to a minority group. But bullying is not merely the consequence of these prejudices towards a minority group. At times, victims may also adhere to the demands of the bully in order to avoid more direct negative actions which might also be physical such as hitting, kicking or abusing (Horton et. al., 2015). This also sheds light on the behaviors students are forced into in the name of bullying. In such a

scenario, the perspectives of a victim towards a bully are expected to be different. This also suggests that power relations between bullies and victims can manifest in multiple ways.

The classification given by Olweus (1993) as direct and indirect bullying behaviors might be well accepted at the surface level but there are other possible interpretations buried inside these overt categories. A student as a bully might not always engage in direct physical bullying behaviors but might exercise his/her power by use of more covert means which are invisible at the surface level.

Power manifests not only amongst individuals in bullying behaviors but also our institutions (schools) are based on a hierarchy of power. The schools within which bullying occurs are disciplinary institutions that are themselves characterized by and organized around power relations. By itself, a number of school actions such as timetables, seating arrangements, and assessment techniques are directed towards the students from the teachers' side. Students as bullies make use of such disciplinary actions and mold them as per their convenience to gain access to things they otherwise are unable to do such as swapping seats. In this manner, the institution and its discipline and decorum are passed on from the institution to the bullying relations between individuals (Horton et. al., 2015)

Above mentioned are the multiple perspectives that the students and educators hold about bullying behaviors in school. This difference in perspectives can be attributed to the reason that bullying behaviors are most likely to occur at places where the access to teachers or other authorities is difficult. Psychologist Anuja Kapur of Delhi explains four major traits of bullying

- (i) Intentional: Bullying is a deliberate act carried out by individuals with a specific agenda in mind to cause physical or mental harm.
- (ii) Hurtful: It is a negative behavior resulting from a negative mind set which may result in physical harm, verbal abuse, isolation and mental trauma in the victim.
- (iii) Repetitive: Kids hurt others by accident but most bullying victims suffer from repeated occurrences and are traumatized.
- (iv) Imbalance of Power: Bullying is also characterized by imbalance of power with the dominant person victimizing the weaker one.

Knowledge of these characteristics is helpful for parents and teachers to understand how school bullies act and why do they bully. Bullying is result of wrong mind set and attitude often used by bullies to justify their behavior. Sometimes the bullies are simply imitating their parents or elders behavior at home. It has also come to the light that very often bullies use this behavior as defense mechanism at school because they have been bullied by some elder at home.

CONCLUSION:

The instances of bullying are varied due to different causes and number of factors affecting it. There cannot be a standard set of rules to be adopted by schools as it is very sensitive interpersonal issue of the students. A law against bullying and a prompt, strict legal action taken by school authorities wherever needed will definitely act as a deterrent to future acts of bullying. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has made mandatory for its schools to warn students through a public display boards that bullying in any form will not be tolerated in the premises. The severe consequences like fines, suspension and expulsion for bullying should be very clear in every student's mind. The recent literature by Indian researchers might mention about bullying but does not delve deep into its contextual understanding, finding reasons for such behavior, role of institution and society and the why of the behavior of the bullies. The common thread running across these researches is the development of understanding of the prevalence of bullying in certain selected schools as the research sample but many a deeper layers are still unexplored.

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