

Bully as a child, criminal as an adult:

Bullying behaviours tend to continue from elementary through high school,
college and well into adulthood.

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Abstract

This study examined whether bullying and victimization continues from elementary through high school and college. The non-random sample consisted of 50 Montréal, Canadian college students from two colleges. The participants were 18 years or older. These students filled out survey questionnaires in their college settings and through e-mail. A total of 80% of students were involved in bullying incidence, including 20 % who were ascribed as victims, 13% as bullies, 15% as victims and bullies and 15% as bystanders. The results indicate that 20% of all participants are still involved in bullying either as a victim or as a bully. Victimization is mostly associated with indirect bullying mainly to the female gender in high school and college, and many victims reported not attending school and having low grade level as a result of being bullied. Bullying is mostly related to feeling of superiority by the bully and peer reinforcement. Victims were more likely to become bullies, when they turn out to be aggressive as a result of bullying. The results also indicate that victims are less likely to report bullying to an adult or authority of the school. Implications for preventing onset of bullying are discussed.

Introduction

An estimated 16% of student in mid-school had been bullied on more than twelve occasions in one year period according to statistics Canada from the self report survey taken from Toronto youth in year 2006. Bullying can be defined as an act of intentional harm, which may be repeated over time, where an imbalance of power exists between the parties involved (Olweus, 1999). A bully can be a male or a female. It has negative effect on everyone that is involved, causing distress to the ones who are bullied, those who bully others and those who know it is going on. Bullying can take many forms such as, physical aggression (punching, kicking, and biting), Verbal aggression (threats, name calling, insults, racial or sexual comments), and social exclusion (spreading rumours, ignoring, gossiping, excluding) (Pepler & Craig, 2000; Ma, Stewin & Mah, 2001).

Bullying can affect the victim physically and psychologically such as causing depression, social anxiety, poor self-esteem and lower academic achievement and aggressive tendencies, which may last for decades, and sometime a lifetime (Pepler & Craig, 2000; Harris, Petrie, & Willoughby, 2002). The victims may also exhibit symptoms of suicide (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999). The bullies may become involved in anti-social behaviors such as sexual harassment, domicile violence, gang-related violence, and criminal activities causing harm to people around them. This present study will focus on three group of people that are involved in bullying behavior; the victim, the bully and the bystander in elementary, high school and college, with respect to factors that can influence the continuity of bullying. It is hypothesized that bullying is an event that tend to continue from elementary, through high school and college.

Literature Review

In the research study by Jankauskiene, kardelis, Sukys, Kardeliene (2010), two questions were addressed. First, is there an association between bullying behaviour with indicators of psychosocial health? Second, is there any correlation in bullying behaviour and social demographic factors? The focus of this study is to investigate the involvement of psychosocial factors such as self-esteem, happiness, body mass index, relationships in family and with teachers, smoking and alcohol use and the social demographical factors such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status with incidence of bullying. An initial sample of 1,162 random students from the sixth, eighth and eleventh grades participated in this study. The population was chosen from 17 secondary schools at Lithuania. The gender distribution had no relevant differences. The results indicated a significant relation in bullying and the following independent variables: Gender: boys were more involved in bullying than girls. Secondary school grade: 6th and 8th graders were more involved than the 11th graders. Gender: male students were more involved, Smoking: students who smoked were more likely to bully than non-smoking students, lower self-esteem: student who were unhappy and had lower self esteem were also involved in bullying. There was a significant relation in victimization and the following variables: Grade level: student in grade 6 & 8 were victimized more than grade 11 students. Self-esteem: Students with low self-esteem were more likely to be victimized and happiness: unhappy students were mostly the target and obese students were more likely to be victimized than students with normal body mass index. Researchers found that 57 % of participants were bullied more than once a week, in which 13% were the victims and 16 % were the bullies.

Next, Jones, Manstead and Livingston (2009) investigated the social identity theory and the intergroup emotion theory related to bullying. According to the research (Jones, Manstead & Livingston, 2009), Social identity of a person is made by the group membership. Intergroup

emotions are those which take groups rather than individuals as the subject and object of the emotions. In order to examine the roles of social identity processes and group-based emotions in perceptions of and responses to bullying, the following variables were tested: pride, shame, guilt, anger, affiliation with the bully, keeping away from the bully's group, saying sorry to the victim, and telling the teacher. The samples of 98 children between the ages of nine to eleven were randomly selected. The participants were asked to read a story in which a bully, supported by his or her group, was described as being unkind to another child in a different group. The reactions to hypothetical vignette were analyzed in classifying the children in different groups. The children were classified as being in either the bully's group, the victim's group, or the third party group according to their character identities. It was predicted that the emotions experience by the group will be affected by group membership and that certain emotional feelings expressed by individuals will be linked to certain action in respond to the emotion. In other word a student's responds to bullying will differ when they are said to belong to a certain group, which may be the bully group, the ones bullied, or the third party. The results indicated that 85% of respondents agreed that it was the bully as a person who was responsible for the bullying, while 65% of the participants agreed that it was the group that was responsible for the bullying. Those who identified more highly with the bully's group reported a higher level of shame and pride in that group's behaviour, while those who identified more highly with the victim's group reported more anger about the bullying incidents. The results for the relations between emotions and action tendencies revealed that pride was positively associated to attachment with the bully and that saying sorry was only related to being guilty and participant were more likely to tell the teacher when they felt anger.

Karna, Voetan, Poskiparta & Salmivalli (2010) conducted the research to examine whether the bystanders' behaviours moderate the risk for victimization posed by peer rejection and social anxiety. This research was part of the KiVa project for developing an anti-bullying intervention program for the Finnish comprehensive schools. A sample of 6,980 students in 378 classrooms from 77 different primary schools in Finland between the third and fifth grade were used for the data collection of this study. The students were asked to fill out internet-based questionnaires in their schools' computer labs. The aspects of these questionnaires were focused on two bystander behaviours: reinforcing the bully and defending the victim. The results support the hypothesis that the bystanders' behaviours moderate the effect of individual and interpersonal risk factors for victimization. According to the results, within-classroom, students who were more rejected or more socially anxious than their classmates were more likely to be victimized. Reinforcing behaviours encouraged bullying and made the victim feel more humiliated and isolated, while defending the victim ease the effect of peer rejection and social anxiety on victimization. In addition, younger male students were victimized more often. Between-classroom correlations from the study indicated that students were more victimized in classrooms where bullying was reinforced to a high degree and less victimized in classrooms where victims were defended more.

In the fourth article, Unnever & Cornell (2004), talked about how the decision to seek help from adults is crucial in bullying situations. The following factors that may be associated with reporting or not reporting bully victimization were examined: chronicity and type of bullying, school climate, family context, and demographic and attitude characteristics of the victim. To examine these factors, researchers had administered surveys to be completed by 2,472 Virginia students from six schools in their sixth, seventh and eighth grade. The students were also asked to report the bullying behaviours that took place between August and October to cover the recent school year. The results indicated that the victims were more likely to tell

someone if they were chronically bullied, of female gender, and perceived that their school would not tolerate bullying. In addition, victims were also less likely to tell someone the more they were exposed to coercive parenting, which involves the use of aggressive tactics, such as threatening language and expressions of anger, to manage a child's behaviour. Unnever & Cornell (2004) also suggested that by seeking help, victims may benefit from health related issues, and have less chances of being bullied in the future and this study has given strong evidence to support this suggestion.

Method

The non-random sample was drawn from two colleges in Montreal, Canada. Fifty Surveys were distributed through online via e-mail and in person and forty students who were involved in bullying incidents were chosen to complete the survey. This study limited the age at 18, and had 26 questions about bullying behaviours. Also 63% of the population were female and 38% were male. Since the size of the sample is very small, the results cannot be generalized to all students in Montréal and are restricted to the sample itself.

Measures

Questions were addressed according to different category: the victim, the bully, both bully and the victim, and bystander. To measure victimization, the survey included twelve questionnaires to address the frequency, the place of incidence, the offenders, type of bullying, the reaction, and the factors influencing the reporting of the incidence, the effect and the duration of bullying. The following types of bullying were analyzed for each four group: physical aggression (punching, kicking, biting, tipping, shoving around, threatening, hitting), verbal aggression (threats, name calling, insults, racial or sexual comments), and social exclusion (spreading rumours, ignoring, gossiping, excluding, cyber bullying). To measure the bullying behaviour, the survey addressed

seven questions to the participants who bully others in order to analyze the frequency, the place of incidence, the type of bullying, reason for bullying, the reaction of the peers, and duration of the bullying, to examine when it was stopped. The following bystander behaviours were analyzed: reinforcing the bully and defending the victim. The final seven questions were addressed to bystanders who witnessed the bullying in order to examine the frequency, the place of incidence, the type of bullying, to whom it was reported to, the observed effect on the victim, and the general idea about bullying in school.

Results

Victimization occurred most often by female students in high schools and by group of people in colleges. 40% of all students were victimized in which the bullying took place once to twice a week for more than half of the victims. 20 % of all the students who were victimized were equally associated with verbal aggression (threats, name calling, insults, racial or sexual comments) and social exclusion (spreading rumours, ignoring, gossiping, excluding, cyber bullying). The reaction to the bullying was also equally attributed to student not attending schools or bullying back, in which case the victim became the bully. Only 10% of all student reacted to bullying by telling someone superior that is when racist remarks were made about them. 18% of students admitted to bullying someone, within the 18%, 43% agreed to have bullied less than once a week and 29% agreed to bullying most days, in which it was equally done by both the female and male gender. Social exclusion (spreading rumours, ignoring, gossiping, excluding) is positively correlated with bullying. Peer pressure and feeling of superior played a part in reinforcing the bullying behaviour, while the peer reaction such as giggling or laughing encouraged the continuity of bullying. The results of students who were considered to be bullies and victims show a strong correlation to the reaction of being bullied, in which all of the victims became aggressive and as a result started to engage in bullying activities. Shocking 55% of

student who bullied agreed that they still engage in activities such as ignoring, gossiping, name calling and excluding. Victimization was witnessed most days by bystanders, who reported that it occur most often in high school, where the victim was mostly excluded or ignored and as a result the victim seemed to be suffering from anxiety (feeling shaky, nervous, fear, worry, uneasiness or dread). Most of the bystander reported the situation to the principal or teacher and 67% of all bystanders believe that bullying should be punished severely.

As hypothesized, bullying behaviours tend to continue from elementary through high school and college with 15% of all victims reported to still being victimized, 56% of all bullies reported to still bullying others and 20 % of all participants reported to still being involved in bullying behaviour while they are in college.

Discussion

The strong correlation between the grade level and victimization from the results that show many students being victimized in high school is similar to the study done by Jankauskiene, kardelis, Sukys, Kardeliene (2010), in which student in grade six and eight were mostly victimized compared to other grade levels. Many important factors were analysed in this study, this can help in creating new studies to compare the importance of each factor in determining the causal factors of bullying. Student may also be monitored according to these factors when they are reported as being bullied to better help the victim or in identifying the bully. Two finding are common to both my study and the study done by Jones, Manstead & Livingston (2009), and Karna, Voetan, Poskiparta & Salmivalli (2010), in both articles bullying is positively associated with feeling of superior or pride and victimization tend to create more anger with the group that is victimized, as a result, it may turn the victim into a bully. They also found that, reinforcing the bully by laughing or giggling at the victim made the victim feel more humiliated and isolated while encouraging bullying, this result coincides with my study. By teaching students the

importance of being against bullying and reporting of any bullying incidents, will eventually reduce the reoccurrence of victimization and may even diminish such acts in educational institutions. In my research, only 10% of all student reacted to bullying by telling someone superior that is when racist remarks were made about them, the article by Unnever & Cornell (2004) gives us some reasons that explain this low percentage of students that were willing to report the bullying incidents, according to theirs the results, victims were more likely to tell someone if they were chronically bullied. Taking into consideration that anything that is chronicle may have negative consequences before it was actually reported. Therefore we suggest not giving the chance for things to get out of hand and placing awareness program in each school starting from elementary to be thought at the beginning of every school year, underlining the rights and obligations of each individual, the actions that are permitted and the consequences of negative actions such as bullying.

Conclusion

The strongest result we found was the continuity of bullying incidence. However the sample size is significantly small therefore the results are sensitive. They would not be applied to the general population. Because this study was based on self-report, the accuracy of students' responses may not be confirmed. Finally my study has many correlations in regards to bullying and victimization but it is missing the causal relations between different factors. Future studies should be focused more on the behaviour of the bully, evaluating the causal factors of bullying other than the reinforcement of the peers and pride and the factors such as school's overall attitude toward bullying which can influence the reporting of the bullying incidence for the victims and the bystanders.

Chart 1 Distribution of Age

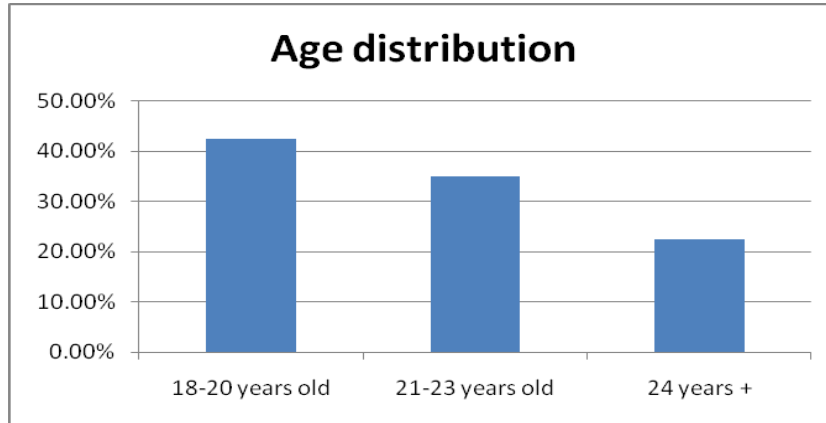


Chart 2 Distribution of Gender

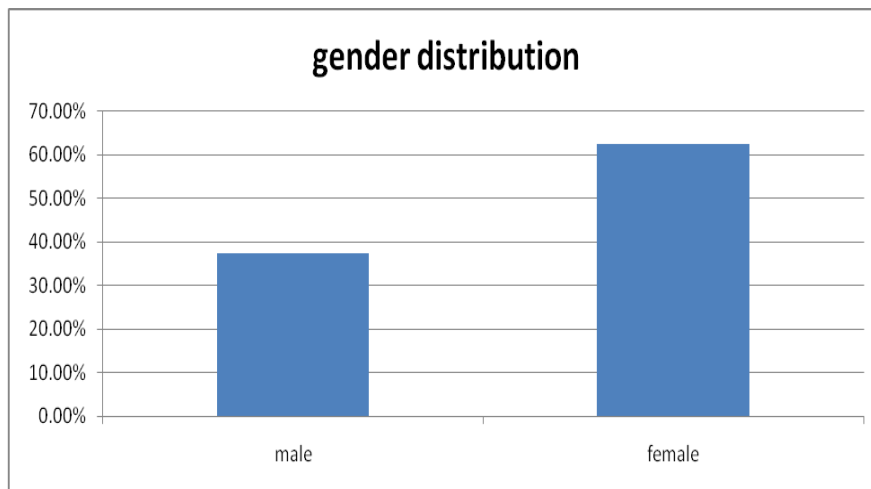


Chart 3. The place of the bullying incidence

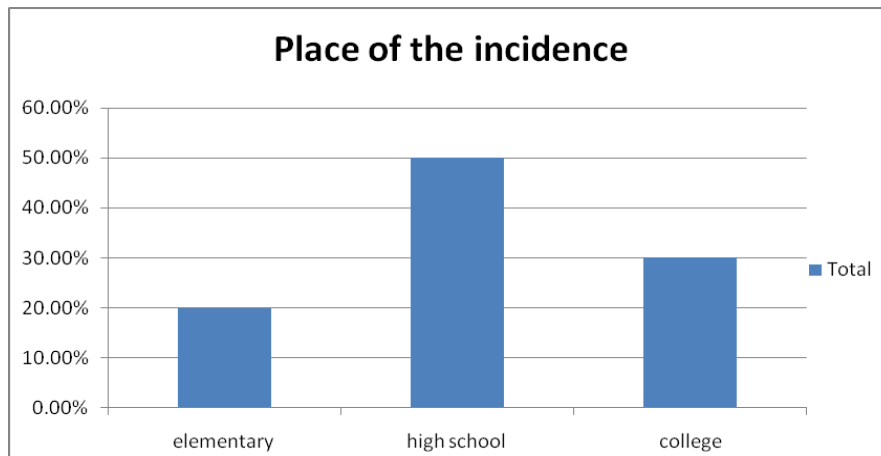


TABLE 1
Frequency of victimization by gender

how often did it occur	What is your gender		
	male	female	Grand Total
everyday	6.25%	6.25%	12.50%
most days	0.00%	12.50%	12.50%
once to twice a week	18.75%	31.25%	50.00%
less than once a week	25.00%	0.00%	25.00%
Grand Total	50.00%	50.00%	100.00%

TABLE 2
Frequency of bullying by gender

how often did it occur	What is your gender		
	male	female	Grand Total
everyday	14.29%	0.00%	14.29%
most days	14.29%	14.29%	28.57%
once to twice a week	0.00%	14.29%	14.29%
less than once a week	0.00%	42.86%	42.86%
Grand Total	28.57%	71.43%	100.00%

TABLE 3
Numbers of victims, bullies and bystanders by gender

type of person	What is your gender		
	male	female	Grand Total
Victim	20.00%	20.00%	40.00%
bully	5.00%	12.50%	17.50%
victim and bully	5.00%	15.00%	20.00%
bystander	7.50%	15.00%	22.50%
Grand Total	37.50%	62.50%	100.00%

TABLE 4
Distribution of victimization compared to the offender and the place of incidence

	Q5: where did it occur most often			
Q6: by whom did it occur most often	elementary	high school	college	Grand Total
male student	15.00%	5.00%	5.00%	25.00%
female student	5.00%	20.00%	5.00%	30.00%
female teacher	0.00%	10.00%	0.00%	10.00%
group of people	0.00%	15.00%	20.00%	35.00%
Grand Total	20.00%	50.00%	30.00%	100.00%

TABLE 5
The reporting of the incidence by the type of bullying encountered

Q7: type of bullying encountered	other students	parents	teacher, principal	no one	Grand Total
physical (pushed, kicked, hit, shoved)	5.00%	0.00%	5.00%	10.00%	20.00%
name calling, teasing	5.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	10.00%
rumours/lie told	0.00%	10.00%	5.00%	5.00%	20.00%
excluded, ignored from groups	10.00%	0.00%	0.00%	15.00%	25.00%
cyber bullying/threaten	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	15.00%	15.00%
racist remarks	0.00%	5.00%	5.00%	0.00%	10.00%
Grand Total	20.00%	15.00%	15.00%	50.00%	100.00%

TABLE 6
Duration of bullying and the number of victims by grades

when was bullying stopped	Type of person		
	victim	bully and victim	Grand Total
grade 7-8	10.00%	10.00%	20.00%
grade 9-11	25.00%	0.00%	25.00%
1st year of college	30.00%	5.00%	35.00%
still continuing	15.00%	5.00%	20.00%
Grand Total	80.00%	20.00%	100.00%

TABLE 7
Duration of bullying and the number of bullies

	Q9: do you still bully others	
Q3: type of person	yes	no
bully	36.36%	27.27%
bully and victim	18.18%	18.18%
Grand Total	54.55%	45.45%

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