

Age and Peer Victimization among School Adolescents in Kathmandu, Nepal

Dasrath Neupane¹

¹English Lecturer |¹Baneshwor Campus, |Navodit College Samakhushi, Kathmandu

¹Ph D Scholar, Dr. K N Modi University Newai, Rajasthan, India

neupane.dasarath@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Bullying or peer victimization is an intentional harassment that occurs when there is a power imbalance between individuals or groups. It is assumed that peer victimization varies with age. The present study was conducted to explore the correlation of victimization to age among school adolescents in Kathmandu, Nepal. The study uses a quantitative approach. It is correlational in design employing a pen-and-paper self-report survey. There were 524 students from 4 public and 4 private schools of grade 8 and 10 students. The result of the study diverges from the findings reported in previous literature. Findings in terms of age-related associations do not follow patterns generally predicted by theory or previous research, because, as this study shows there are no significant relationships between age and any form of bullying or victimization.

KEY WORDS

Bullying, victimization, age-difference, direct and indirect peer-victimization

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a repeated oppression, physical or mental, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons. It occurs where there is an imbalance in power among people, and it is a persistent or continued unwelcome behaviour. It is a kind of behaviour characterized by deliberate desire to hurt. Negative actions can be physical contact (such as hitting or kicking), words (e.g., teasing, and calling names), or obscene gestures or facial expressions. Negative actions also include the intentional exclusion of a student and the spreading of rumours. It is the intention behind the act as well as the act itself, which is important. A mere look or gesture or a refusal to reply becomes bullying if the behaviour is intended to and does, in fact, cause distress. Parodying a person's speech or behaviour is not bullying if the intention is to please rather than to cause distress to the other person. Similarly, verbally or physically attacking another is not bullying if, for example, the intention is to defend property or territory rather than to cause distress.

With the increasing public concern about school safety, researchers have broadened the definition of school violence to include any conditions or acts that create a climate in which individual students and teachers feel fear or intimidation in addition to being the victims of assault, theft, or vandalism (Batsche, 2013). For Batsche, bullying creates a fearful climate to students and teachers. It is not only the problems within the students. It disturbs whole the school environment. Sometimes there will be peer victimization as well as upward or downward bullying too. Peer victimization means an inappropriate behaviour like bullying within the same group, for example, between the students as individuals or groups. On the other hand, upward bullying means bully from juniors to senior, and downward bullying means from senior to junior. Similarly, R.J. Hazler in his article "Bullying: Perceptions of adolescent victims in the midwestern U.S.A." views that bullying in school has devastating effects on students, often leading to "violent and disastrous consequences for both victims and bullies" (1994, p. 39).

Peer victimization does not merely cause assault. It causes psychological effect, which is long-lasting. P.T. Slee says that victims of bullying suffer from "a loss of self-esteem lasting long into their adult life" (p. 99). Bullying may not have adverse effect for the time being. It creates a long-term effect upon victims. Victims of bullying suffer from a loss of self-esteem into their adult life. According to Farrington, bullies at school are very likely to bully their spouses and children later. He argues that "society is the utmost victim of bullying because bullies in school are very likely to bully their spouses and children later, which perpetuates the cycle of domestic violence and creates new generations of aggressive children" (p. 21). Thus, bullying has a long-term effect. It creates cycle of domestic violence which can be seen even in new generations.

Bullying and victimization among youth have received increased attention in recent years by researchers and educators internationally. Researchers have found that these phenomena are widespread among school-age children across several countries in Europe (Timmerman, 2003), North America (Pellegrini & Long, 2002), and Oceania (Smith, 2000). However, we are unaware of any published studies on either bullying or victimization of school-age children that have been conducted in Nepal. Thus, the purpose of the current study is to examine bullying and victimization in terms of age among school-age children in Kathmandu, Nepal. Archer asserts; "Although social role theory makes no specific predictions regarding gender, age, and aggression, social learning theory provides some clarification" (Barboza, et al., 2009, p. 46). Archer states that the two theories parallel each other such that social learning processes (e.g., observation, modeling) facilitate the acquisition and maintenance of aggressive behaviours in accordance with social roles. Effectively, social learning predicts that gender differences will initially be minor in childhood and will increase with age due to the cumulative impact of socialization processes.

Although we are unaware of any published studies on either bullying or victimization of school-age children that have been conducted in Nepal, a researcher by the name of Niti Rana from Kathmandu University has raised issue in her dissertation. It seems that research on bullying and victimization among school age children is needed. The current study is part of a large investigation concerning bullying and victimization among school-age children in Nepal. Based on the existing literature and Focus Group Discussion, I have proposed the following hypotheses:

1. There would be a significant negative correlation between physical bullying and age.
2. There would be a significant negative correlation between physical victimization and age.
3. There would be a significant positive correlation between indirect bullying and age.
4. There would be a significant positive correlation between indirect victimization and age.

METHODOLOGY

Design and Participants

The study was correlational in design employing a pen-and-paper self-report survey. Within the survey, two separate instruments measured the criterion variables bullying and victimization. There are a number of methodological considerations, beginning with issues surrounding the consent procedures and the form of survey (i.e., self-report) employed in the present study that required consideration. There were 524 participants from 4 public and 4 private schools from Kathmandu, Nepal. Among them 238 were boys and 286 girls of grades 8 and 10 of age from 13 to 17 years.

Materials

The constructs were measured using pen-and-paper self-report questionnaires. Each of the two scales began on a separate page with its own preamble to introduce the scale, resulting in a questionnaire battery including an instruction/cover sheet. The initial instructions to participants were

presented on the first page of the survey and included an innocuous practice question in the style common to most survey items. To measure the correlation of peer victimization with reference to age, Bullying Scale (Björkqvist et al., 1992) and Victimization Scale (Björkqvist et al., 1992) scales were used.

Procedure

In the development phase during which the various instruments were designed or modified to suit the intended sample, draft versions of the questionnaire were evaluated by the supervisor. In addition, final draft versions of the questionnaire were shown to a small number of adolescents known to the researcher as a means of gaining an initial evaluation of the survey’s readability and of the likely time required for completion. These trial questionnaires were not subsequently used for any other purpose and were destroyed.

The researcher then outlined the study and its objectives, after which it was collaboratively decided how to best implement the research process. Consequently, the participant Information Sheet and Consent Form were later distributed by school teachers to all students to take home to their parents or guardians. Completed consent forms signed by participating students and their parents or guardians were returned to teachers. A schedule was then drawn up allowing the researcher to collect data. Completed surveys were collected by the researcher and sealed in unmarked envelopes; the classroom survey process took approximately 25 minutes on average.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis 1, which predicted that there would be a significant negative correlation between direct bullying and age, was not supported. Similarly, results did not support Hypothesis 2, which predicted a significant negative correlation between direct victimization and age. Table no. 1 given below is comprehensive. First, it should be considered that the collapsing of physical and verbal aggressive behaviours into the single direct bullying and direct victimization factors through principal components analysis might possibly have confounded these results. However, as the pilot study results also failed to find significant age effects for physical or verbal bullying and victimization, it is unlikely that the aggregating of data into a direct component substantially influenced results. Nevertheless, it does create some difficulty in making direct comparisons with previous research that has analyzed aggression or bullying using separate physical and verbal factors.

			Age	Physical bullying	Physical victimization
Spearman's rho	Age	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.095*	.031
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.015	.239
		N	524	524	524
	Physical bullying	Correlation Coefficient	.095*	1.000	.417**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.015	.	.000
		N	524	524	524
	Physical victimization	Correlation Coefficient	.031	.417**	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.239	.000	.
		N	524	524	524
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).					
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).					

Table no. 1: Correlation between Age and Physical Bullying, and Age and Physical Victimization

Generally, the findings of the present study contradict the body of previous research that has consistently found physical aggression to decrease throughout adolescence. For example, Osterman et.al. found an age-related trend of decreased use of physical aggression by boys and girls in their cross-cultural study of peer estimates of aggression in adolescents, although there was a slight increase in levels of verbal aggression with age. The present study’s findings also deviate from those of Pellegrini and Long who found that “children exhibited an increase in levels of bullying during the transition from primary to secondary school, with levels declining in the higher grades” (2002, p. 274). Pellegrini and Long proposed that as incoming primary students encountered and formed new social groupings in the early years of secondary school, they were put at greater risk of being bullied until new social hierarchies were established. If the present study had taken a wider age cross-section to include students in the latter lower-secondary and secondary school years, it may have found evidence of developmental differences although, as Archer noted, “longitudinal studies are a more effective method of determining developmental changes” (Archer, 2012, p. 314).

To elaborate, Hypothesis 3 (There would be significant positive correlation between indirect bullying and age.) predicted a significant positive correlation between indirect bullying and age, with Hypothesis 4 (There would be a significant positive correlation between indirect victimization and age.) predicting a corresponding significant positive correlation between indirect victimization and age. These predictions were supported by the results of the present study, with significant age-related correlations evident.

Correlations				
		Age	Indirect bullying	Indirect victimization
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	.043	.032
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.161	.235
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	637.550	125.786	137.862
	Covariance	1.219	.241	.265
	N	524	524	522
Indirect bullying	Pearson Correlation	.043	1	.474**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.161		.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	125.786	13186.305	9347.333
	Covariance	.241	25.213	17.941
	N	524	524	522
Indirect victimization	Pearson Correlation	.032	.474**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.235	.000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	137.862	9347.333	29777.931
	Covariance	.265	17.941	57.155
	N	522	522	522
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).				

Table no. 2: Correlation between Age and Indirect Bullying, and Age and Indirect Victimization

These findings shore up those of Owens, who found levels of indirect aggression “to increase with age through Years 2, 6, 9, and 11” (52). Owens opines that with increase the age the school children change their aggression mode from direct to indirect. The present study’s findings that age and indirect aggression were related provides supportive evidence for social learning theory of Bandura and the social role theory of Eagly, in predicting the influence of age and gender on indirect aggression. Archer proposed that “These two theories parallel each other, whereby social learning processes, such as observation and modeling, facilitate the acquisition and maintenance of aggressive behaviours in accordance with social roles” (311). Therefore, social learning predicts that gender differences in indirect aggression will be obvious and increase through childhood as a result of the cumulative impact of socialization processes such as parental, peer, and media influences.

To elaborate, the present study, in drawing upon a sample with age range of 13 to 17 years, may simply have missed the age group wherein changes in levels of indirect aggression are typically evident. It could be that by the time a child reaches 13 years or thereabouts, he or she may already have all the necessary social and cognitive skills needed to aggress indirectly and there will be no further age-related changes. Had the present cross-sectional study included the final years of secondary school and the later Lower Secondary years, the expected developmental changes may have been found.

It is a clear limitation of the present study that no information was obtained to determine whether any anti-bullying programmes were in place in individual schools and how this may have affected the results. It is reasonable to assume that all schools would have at least an awareness of the prevalence and negative consequences of bullying, as well as some form of anti-bullying programme or procedure in place.

Despite this, it is unlikely that merely determining the presence in a school of an anti-bullying programme will be sufficient to fully control for possible effects of a programme on the results of a study, both within and between schools. However, the process of gaining additional information such as the type of programme, its duration, and the degree of success, will likely result in a study of unwieldy complexity and one that resembles an intervention evaluation. Returning to indirect aggression, the main study findings are worthy of further discussion as they support with the results of the pilot study’s, which found self-report indirect bullying and indirect victimization to decrease with age.

To summarize age differences, although it was predicted that direct bullying and direct victimization would decrease with age and that indirect bullying and indirect victimization would increase with age, results showed that these forms of bullying vary significantly as a function of age.

CONCLUSION

The previous section discussed the findings and analyses that explored the relationships between bullying and victimization in adolescents, whilst also considering prevalence rates. This section summarizes the major findings and limitations of the present study, beginning with age differences, and discussed how they might provide opportunities for future research and influence the development and evaluation of school bullying interventions. Findings in terms of age-related associations did not follow patterns generally predicted by theory or previous research, as there were no significant relationships between age and any form of bullying or victimization. Bullying is a problem in schools and needs to be handled with precision and care. It is time for people involved in the school system to stop bullying and be willing to go the extra mile to make schools the safe places they once were. If nothing is done with regard to bullying we are going to have a generation of people

whose sense of self has been affected in such a way that they have not grown or felt safe enough to grow into the person they could be.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Archer, J. (2012). Sex differences in aggression in real-world settings: A meta-analytic review. *Review of General Psychology, 8*, 291-322.
- Barboza, G., Schiamberg, L., Oehmke, J., K. S., Post, L., & Heraux, C. (2009). Individual Characteristics and the Multiple Contexts of Adolescent Bullying: An Ecological Perspective. *Journal of Youth Adolescence, 38*, 101-121.
- Batsche, G. &. (2013). Bullies and their victims: Understanding a pervasive problem in the schools. *School Psychology Review, 23*, 165-174.
- Farrington, D. (2009). Childhood aggression and adult violence: Early precursors and later-life outcomes. (D. & Pepler, Ed.) *The development and treatment of children aggression*, 5-29.
- Hazler, R. (1994). Bullying breeds violence. You can stop it! *Learning, 22*(6), 38-41.
- Pellegrini, A., & Long, J. (2002). A longitudinal study of bullying, dominance and victimization during the transition from primary school through secondary school. *British Journal of Development Psychology, 20*, 259-280.
- Pellegrini, A., & Long, J. D. (2002). A longitudinal study of bullying, dominance, and victimization during transition from primary school through secondary school. *British Journal of Development Psychology, 20*, 259-280.
- Slee, P. (1994). Situational and interpersonal correlates of anxiety associated with peer victimization. *Child Psychology and Human Development, 25*, 97-107.
- Smith, P. &. (2000). Bullying in schools: Lessons from two decades of research. *Aggressive Behaviour, 26*, 1-9.
- Timmerman, G. (2003). Sexual harassment of adolescents perpetrated by teachers and by peers: An exploration of the dynamics of power, culture, and gender in secondary schools. *Sex Roles, 48*, 231-244.