

THE MULTIFACETED ISSUE OF BULLYING: CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES, AND SOLUTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Visualize being awake every day scared of going out, attending class, or even using your social media apps not because of the homework or tests but due to the constant harassment in the form of hateful comments, looks, and murmurs. Unfortunately, this is not imagination for most people, it is their reality.

They have to deal with it while praying to God to make it all a dream so they may wake up from their nightmares. They have to fight in classrooms, hallways, and even behind the screen. Bullying is not just a word, it is a war that you have to fight every single day and abandons you with deep scars.

Bullying is defined as ongoing aggressive behavior aimed at harming, threatening, or dominating another individual. Most of the time if not all, bullying begins from childhood, like in school age. In the beginning, the children do not realize it at all, because it begins with small jokes and ends up being something really awful, which has a negative impact on a person's mental and physical health.

It can take many forms: bullying by force, by words, by social status, and through the internet. Physical bullying is a type of bullying that involves many kinds of physical assault, from hitting to pushing, kicking, and so on.

Harmful spoken words, name-calling, threats, and insults are considered to be verbal bullying. When it comes to psychological bullying, it aims to destroy a person's self-confidence and social status through abandoning, manipulation, or the spreading of rumors. Lastly, the use of online platforms like social media, chats, or emails to humiliate, harass, or threaten someone can create cyberbullying.

But the question is, why is bullying such a serious issue? Because it has effects on victims' academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being. It can lead to severe consequences like anxiety at the beginning, then depression, low self-esteem, self-harm, and even suicide. However, bullying is not just in educational places like schools, colleges, or universities, it can occur in workplaces like offices, hospitals, clinics, or in service industries such as stores or restaurants and so on. The main point is, that bullying is everywhere and anyone can be a bully. It may be a classmate, coworker, friend, family member, or even an important figure such as a teacher or manager. In order to foster a safe community, addressing bullying problems is very crucial.

Furthermore, the K-drama "Study Group" portrays this brutal reality powerfully by showing the harsh school violence, emotional abuse, and students' daily struggles very well. Inspired by this, in my essay, we will consider psychological effects, legal aspects,

intervention tactics, and the influence of social media, in order to better grasp the complexity and answers to bullying.

Psychological Effects of Bullying

Words have the power to create more pain than any bodily injury ever could. Indeed, it will be undetectable, but the reality of it is incredibly painful. For the victims who experienced bullying, the act of humiliation and the way they isolate themselves sinks them deeper into the phase called depression. At first, bullies think their little jokes won't hurt the other person, so they keep them doing. Consequently, constant exposure to verbal abuse, social exclusion, and physical threats can lead to severe emotional distress, often manifesting as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Victims of bullying frequently struggle with feelings of worthlessness, believing that they are unworthy of love, respect, or success. Over time, these negative emotions can develop into chronic mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and suicidal thoughts. For example, a Chinese friend of mine who I met in the game "Sky: Children of the Light" was in the same situation. She saw herself as a worthless person. When we chatted together, I always told her she was a special person and that she had come so far. By doing this I tried to uplift her mood and self-esteem. Then I came across photos of her self-harm on her profile page. She said the reason for doing this was because she had been betrayed and bullied by her own friends and that caused emotional distress and she couldn't deal with overwhelming feelings. Unfortunately, many other victims also experience difficulty in forming healthy relationships, as the betrayal and cruelty they endured make it hard to trust others. This social withdrawal can lead to loneliness and further intensify feelings of isolation.

Additionally, bullying affects cognitive functioning, as prolonged stress can impair concentration, memory, and academic or work performance, making it difficult for individuals to reach their full potential. In some cases, victims internalize their pain and develop unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as self-harm, eating disorders, or substance abuse, as a way to escape their emotional suffering. The effects of bullying do not simply disappear once the harassment stops, rather, they continue to influence an individual's self-perception and emotional stability well into adulthood. Without proper intervention, the trauma caused by bullying can shape a person's future, which affects their confidence, career choices, and ability to maintain meaningful social connections. According to Rahim and Hasibuan (2020) and Munirah and Zainuddin (2021), reporting bullying occurrences can be difficult for kids, especially if they sense indifference or carelessness from teachers or principals. Bullying can continue without assistance, worsening the issue.

Therefore, it is crucial to address bullying as a serious psychological issue rather than dismissing it as a normal part of growing up. The long-term emotional damage it inflicts highlights the need for stronger anti-bullying initiatives, mental health support, and greater awareness of the devastating consequences that victims endure.

However, attention should be given to the effects on bullies themselves as well as victims. It may seem like bullies hold strong power and control over poor victims, however,

this can lead to negative consequences later in life. As pointed out by Vanderbilt and Augustyn (2010), bullying leads to bad attitudes toward school and an increased likelihood of dropping out. As a result of their actions, bullies are more at risk of exhibiting social issues, aggression, and externalizing behaviors. The cycle of violence is something that occurs logically and profoundly without intervention. Children and teens who naturally bully others stand the chance to seek out criminal behaviors later in life. This form of aggression absolutely has sociopathic elements integrated into it like the absence of empathy, remorse, and having a manipulative nature. Regular bullies are more likely to perpetrate domestic abuse or workplace violence as more severe forms of aggression become acceptable to them. Losing social standing will also follow as a consequence. The more aggressive and dominating children tend to socially isolate themselves because aggressive and manipulative behavior alienates peers. Generally, bullies internalized negative behavior molds their social graph to be shallow, leading to further depression and inability to develop meaningful relationships as they age on their own.

Due to the way society views bullying, it is easy to forget that, psychologically, bullies also risk suffering from low self-esteem, guilt, and shame. Some bullies are propelled by a need to feel superior and have a type of power that stems from extreme narcissism. However, most bullies engage in bullying activities because they themselves are insecure, traumatized, or feel a lack of control in their lives. This multifaceted phenomenon can result in self-hate, anxiety, depression, or suicidal tendencies. Researchers have proven that bullies, including those who continue such behavior as adults, tend to have more issues related to their mental health and are prone to developing suicidal thoughts. There is also the possibility that some bullies, especially those who tend to realize the significant consequences of their actions, often end up feeling regret and overwhelming guilt.

One of the most frequently neglected effects is the damage bullying can cause to a person's future career. Those who practiced bullying in their younger years often develop problems with authority, interpersonal skills, and cooperation, all of which make it difficult for them to function in a professional setting. Some bullies might carry out these negative traits into adulthood, practicing bullying or manipulation at their workplaces, which might result in career stagnation, constant disputes, and loss of employment. Others might suffer professional reputation loss.

Legal Aspects of Bullying

Moreover, these major issues are not left behind. There are always laws to prevent bullying and its outcome. When we talk about prevention in schools, most people if not all think of addressing the teacher first. This is a good starting point to stop bullying from the first stage. By doing this, by telling the trusting adult which means informing a grown-up person that one feels safe to tell some problem or their secrets, regardless of the person's identity or job whether it is male or female, teacher, brother, sister, parents, coach or a mentor, it can solve the problem. However, the policies against bullying are not perfect in most schools and need improvement. From my perspective, the policies only warn the student and their parents. Indeed, it is nice if it's the bully's first time, but then the numbers

keep rising and rising yet the solution remains still the same. For instance, the victim tells to the teacher who is bullying them and what they do to them. The teacher after knowing it will address the school principal. What is so unfortunate is that the school principal only calls the bully's parents to their room and explains what their son or daughter doing to the poor victims, and without any change, the bullying continues.

Furthermore, as bullying is a global issue, this is solved in various ways in different countries. For example, in South Korea where bullying is considered to be a severe issue due to academic stress, societal pressure, and hesitation of the victims to report problems, has strict policies against bullying as there are lots of school violence cases. A law in South Korea called the "Act on the Prevention and Countermeasures Against Violence in Schools" requires schools to document and address instances of bullying. This includes reporting requirements, victim protection, and aggressor intervention. In contrast, Uzbekistan's approach to solving the problem of bullying is rather new and emerging. The nation has made attempts to acknowledge the problem of bullying, especially within the school setting, but there are no sufficient anti-bullying laws. More recently, Uzbekistan has launched several initiatives, including awareness programs in schools as well as educational programs that encourage students to behave well. The government has also aimed at improving child protection laws as well as increasing the role of teachers and psychologists in the prevention of bullying. Nevertheless, also unlike South Korea, Uzbekistan does not have strict penalties that punish bullies severely which leads to inconsistent enforcement. Furthermore, some cultural aspects combined with traditional discipline methods lead to the problem being underestimated.

In my opinion, both countries have been trying their best to cope with matters of bullying, but it has proven that there are limitations in current law for them. South Korea, with its staunch punishment-centered policies, may end up not dealing with the causes of a bully and lacking proper rehabilitative measures. On the other side, Uzbekistan does not seem to have a problem with legal enforcement, but it is difficult to sue any of the bullies. Moreover, both countries face the issue of cyberbullying which is more extensive due to its relative non-enforcement and ease outside the bounds of school. Several measures have to be taken to tackle bullying effectively, including, but not limited to, educational prevention, legal consequences, and mental support to both victims as well as perpetrators.

School Intervention Strategies

Bullying continues to be a major problem in schools across the globe, and teachers and school authorities have a role in trying to resolve the matter and protecting their learners. It is in the best interests of the schools to enact and enforce strict policies against bullying, as well as cultivate respect and awareness in students, as these foster a safe learning environment for all students. Educators actively seeking to stop bullying from occurring can implement rules and consequences. Students are less likely to participate in bullying behavior when they know that there are strict regulations against it, that they will be punished for it, and that serious action will be taken if it does occur. In addition, it is important that teachers monitor students in class, corridors, and on the playground

because bullying can take place when staff are not around. Prevention is the most effective—teachers need to be aware of the normal behavior of all of their students and act in advance on any warning signs like sudden changes in behavior or reluctance to engage in school activities. Teachers should intervene before matters get worse.

Moreover, awareness programs and counseling services are also effective means of confronting bullying. These programs inform teachers, students, and parents of the reasons and effects of bullying, the psychological effects associated with it, and the measures to curb it. Schools can carry out workshops, seminars, and interactive campaigns including poster competitions, with the aim of empathy, kindness, and the importance of standing up for peers and their friends. The implementation of student-led campaigns, counseling services, and anti-bullying posters can significantly deter bullying. Doing everything mentioned not only helps the bullies but also the victims. Victims of bullying tend to suffer from anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, which makes them perform poorly in academics and lowers their well-being. School counselors need to help students manage stress better and ensure they report bullying incidents confidently and without any fear. Additionally, some bullies could be acting aggressively due to trauma or other serious issues at home. Addressing the underlying problems with professional counseling would result in positive behavioral changes.

Numerous schools have stories where they drastically reduced the number of bullying cases after taking proactive measures as detailed above. As an instance, several schools in the United States have adopted peer mediation where students are taught to handle arguments between their classmates peacefully. These initiatives introduce a sense of responsibility in students and encourage them to try and stop bullying, which fosters a positive ethos within the school. On the other hand, some schools in South Korea allow children to report incidents of bullying through online platforms or suggestion boxes that ensure anonymity, making it easier for victims to report cases without the fear of being victimized again.

Social media and Cyberbullying

As it is technology developed era, bullying gets beyond the classroom and workplaces into the digital world. Where people can get any information about one person, their hobby, the place they live in, and every tiny detail about them, which is scary. Unfortunately by knowing this information, some people send some serious threats to them, especially to young people. Cyberbullying is a whole different kind of bullying.

Unlike face-to-face bullying where victim and bully interact in physical locations, cyberbullying is conducted through the internet, primarily on social media, messaging applications, and online games. The definition of bullying is broad and encompasses actions such as harassment, death threats, spreading false rumors, or public humiliation through images and videos. In addition, one of the most notable distinctions between online and offline forms of bullying is how anonymity is dealt with – Cyber bullies operate behind the cover of fake accounts or usernames, making it near impossible for victims to know who abused them or search for help. Also, cyberbullying is unrestrained by

geography. As opposed to usual harassment that takes place at school, online abuse can follow victims to their houses making it feel like there is no place that's safe. Furthermore, the fact that harmful messages, pictures, or videos can be disseminated without restrictions poses a more severe threat. A single post can go viral, which for the victim means more humiliation and psychological trauma.

The fight against cyberbullying is not easy, and enforcing punishment is one of the greatest problems. In cases of traditional bullying, teachers, parents, or school authorities have the advantage of being witnesses, which enables them to act and prevent further aggressive conduct. However, many parents do not report cases of cyber bullying because children do not suffer extreme amounts of pain. Additionally, finding the committer of a crime becomes difficult if there is little information available, if bullies commit offenses through anonymous accounts. Many countries have laws against cyberbullying, but enforcement is always the issue. Social media providers have policies to address bullying and hate speech, yet these policies are often inadequately managed. In many situations, abusive material or posts are left active for hours, even days, before being deleted, and by that time, the damage has already been inflicted. Also, punishing social media harassment has its own complications, as it differs from country to country, and a lot of places don't recognize cyberbullying as a crime. The vagueness and lack of clear authority provide opportunities for abuse, as cyberbullies have no regulations to comply with, thus consequences for victims are far worse.

However, social media can be used to raise awareness against bullying and damage to these children can be prevented, even though it can cause harm. A variety of campaigns to stop bullying have emerged on social media platforms, which inform people about the negative effects of cyberbullying and promote kindness towards victims. Moreover, the use of hashtags such as #StopCyberBullying and #BeKind helps to promote active conversation around the topic of children's safety on the internet and self-care. Parents can also educate their children about digital manners and responsibility so that they can use the internet safely and respectfully.

Conclusion

In conclusion, bullying should be taken into account as a serious problem. Be it traditional or cyberbullying, it is one of the most predominant issues in society.

With the transition into the digital age, bullying has transformed into an even more dangerous hazard as it permits bullies to hide behind the mask of anonymity. Unlike face-to-face bullying, which is restricted to classrooms or professional workplaces, cyberbullying accompanies victims into their homes. With social media enabling such attacks, the emotional damage that follows is immense. This leads to self-harm, depression, anxiety, and in extreme cases, even suicide. Even with all the laws and school policies put in place to eliminate bullying, these measures generally do not resolve the problem fully. Cyberbullying has its own unique difficulties because, unlike conventional bullying, it is nearly impossible to monitor and punish legal offenders due to the anonymity of social media. Nevertheless, social media can still be used positively by victims and activists for

assistance and support. Hashtags, campaigns, and online activism help highlight the issue of bullying and motivate people to do something about it. Bullying prevention requires the united effort of the public, educational institutions, governments, social networks, and other platforms to introduce stronger policies, provide mental self-help, and build an environment of compassion and tolerance. It is only through social media we can create a space where defenseless and vulnerable people are safeguarded.

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