

## **Peer Victimization Among Higher Secondary School Students In Imphal: A Cross Sectional Study**

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### **Abstract:**

**Introduction:** Peer Victimization/Bullying is a regular phenomenon in schools worldwide, which is increasing in recent years and is now considered a public health problem that can have serious consequences in the well being of students.

**Aim:** The aim of this study is to determine the prevalence of peer victimization and its effects in the well being of higher secondary school students.

**Method:** This is a cross sectional study that includes students of XI and XII standards. A self-administered, semi-Structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Chi square test used to compare categorical data. A p value of <0.05 was considered significant.

**Results:** The prevalence of overall bullying was 92.4% and Verbal bullying (72.8%) was more common than physical bullying (36.4%). Majority of the students (71.90%) had been victims of bullying and boys were more likely to be bullied ( $p=<0.001$ ) and bullying significantly affected the studies of the students ( $p = 0.015$ ).

**Conclusion:** The overall prevalence of bullying is very high and is a serious problem affecting studies in a huge proportion of the victims. Further research is needed to find out the underlying cause and associated factors so that appropriate interventions can be planned.

**Keywords** – Bullying, bully, peer, school, victimization.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Peer victimization or bullying is a repeated aggressive or threatening behavior between peers of unequal size or power, not including teasing in a friendly or playful way.<sup>1</sup> It refers to a behavior that is: 1) aggressive or intended to harm; 2) carried out repeatedly and over time; and 3) occurs in an interpersonal relationship where a power imbalance exists. Hitting, name-calling, intimidating gestures, racial slurs, spreading of rumors, and social exclusion by powerful others are all examples of behaviors that constitute peer victimization.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of bullying at school is not new; however it has been increasing in recent years. There is a crucial increase in studies conducted and the number of news on bullying at school in mass media.<sup>3</sup> It is estimated that 40 percent to 80 percent of school age children experience bullying at some point during their school careers.<sup>2</sup> Previously considered a part of normal behavior during growing up, bullying, now is viewed it as to have long-term physical, emotional and academic effects on both the victim and the bully.<sup>4</sup> Bullying has the biggest trend of development in adolescent age, and at the advanced adolescence the frequency of bullying behavior decreases.<sup>3,4</sup>

Kids who bully others are more likely to engage in violent and risky behaviors into adulthood including abusing alcohol and drugs, dropping out of school, having criminal convictions, and engaging in abusive relationships. Children who are being victimized often develop psychological difficulties including social separation and loneliness, anxiety and social phobia, depression and suicidal ideation, fear of going to school, and low self-esteem. Bullying can also affect academic achievement.<sup>1</sup> Acknowledging the seriousness of the problem, the American Medical Association has designated school bullying a public health concern. It is important to address the consequences of bullying at younger age so that their impact in later life can be alleviated.

This study aims to find out the prevalence of Peer Victimization and the effects of bullying in the well being of higher secondary school students of Imphal, Manipur.

## **II. METHODS**

### **Study setting and participants:**

This cross sectional questionnaire survey was conducted among students of Higher Secondary Schools of Imphal, Manipur during November to December 2012. There are 44 higher secondary schools in Imphal and out of them eight schools were selected randomly. All the students of XI and XII standard who were present at the time of data collection and who were willing to participate were included in the study.

A semi-structured questionnaire consisting of two parts was used to collect data. Part A consists of questions about bullying others and reason for bullying others. Part B consists of questions related to being a victim and to what extend bullying affected their study and health. Prior to data collection permission and consent/assent were obtained from the schools' Principals and confidentiality was assured. After giving a standard definition of bullying the students were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire. Collected questionnaires were checked for completeness and consistency. Ethical approval was obtained from Research Ethics Board, regional Institute of Medical Sciences.

**Definition of bullying used:** For the purpose of this study, bullying is defined as any act that is carried out with the intention to hurt or harm others, either verbally or physically.

### **Statistical Analysis:**

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Inc., Chicago IL, USA, 2010) version 21 was used for data entry and analysis. A  $\square$  value  $< 0.05$  was used as the cut-off level for statistical significance. Pearson's Chi-square test was used to assess the association between two qualitative variables.

## **III. RESULTS**

A total of 1039 students participated consisting of 423 (40.7%) boys and 616 (59.3%) girls. The mean age of the participants was  $16.6 \pm 0.93$  years.

The frequency of bullying and victimization items is presented in Table 1. Majority of the students (92.40%) had been engaged in the act of bullying, out of which 48.6% done it mainly for fun. In regards to being a victim of bullying, 71.90% of the participants reported of being a victim and males (79%) were more likely to be a victim when compared to females (67%) ( $p = <0.001$ ). Male students were significantly bullied more than female students both physically (36.4% vs. 22.6%) ( $p=0.001$ ) and verbally (72.8% vs 63.0%) ( $p=<0.001$ ). The commonest reason for being bullied as reported by the students is for fun (26.8%) ( $p=<0.001$ ). (Table 1). Majority (67.5%) reported being bullied more than once a week.

Effects of bullying in the well being of the victims are presented in table 2. Majority (58.8%) of the students reported that bullying had affected their studies and 79.6% felt upset because of it. On the other hand only small proportion remarked that bullying affect their health (18.1%) and 17% avoided school because of bullying.

## **IV. DISCUSSIONS**

In this survey of peer victimization among the higher secondary students the prevalence of bullying is as high as 92.4%. This finding suggests that bullying is still a relatively common problem even though it is believed to decline with age.<sup>5</sup> A similar study in Tamil Nadu also showed a high prevalence of bullying where 81% of students reported of some form bullying occurred in their schools. Bullying-related involvement in our study is very quite high compared to those reported in Western literature.<sup>6</sup>

In general boys are more likely than girls to be bullies, victims, or both. Likewise in our study overall male students were significantly more likely than female students to be bullies or victim. In contrast to this finding a study in North India showed that girls are more likely to be victims than boys.<sup>7</sup> Comparable to other Indian studies, the prevalence of verbal bullying is more than physical bullying<sup>4,8,9</sup> and males are more likely to be victim of both physical and verbal bullying than girls. Others studies have reported a similar finding where boys are bullied both physically and verbally more than girls.<sup>10</sup>

There are many possible reasons for the bullying behaviors among school children like over influence of media, existing life style, social code, food habit, socialization pattern, family set up, school atmosphere, nature of school discipline and class room code of conduct, diminishing moral values etc.<sup>11</sup> In our study, the reasons for being victimized are to inferiority/for making fun (26.8%), jealousy (21%), in retaliation (14.9) and being different (11.2%). Reasons for bullying reported by other studies are to prove dominance or might;<sup>4</sup> low socio-economic status.<sup>10</sup>

Previous studies documented students who are chronic victims of school bullying have psychological and social adjustment problems. Victims have a tendency to blame themselves for their experiences that make it more difficult to cope with the challenging social experiences.<sup>12</sup> In our study bullying has a huge effect on the mental well being of the victims resulting in a major proportion (79.6%) being upset, and affecting another

58.8% in studies. It is noteworthy that although bullying has some impact in the well-being of the victims only a small proportion avoided school because of fear or anticipation of bullying.

## V. TABLES

**Table 1: Prevalence of victimization and bullying by gender**

Characteristics	Male (n = 423)	Female (n = 616)	P value
Ever bullied someone	395 (93.4%)	565 (91.7%)	0.321
<b>Reasons for bullying</b>			
For fun	186 (44.0)	281 (45.6)	0.008
In retaliation	124 (29.3)	124 (20.1)	
Jealousy/Hatred	29 (6.9)	57 (9.3)	
I don't know	56 (13.2)	103 (16.7)	
<b>Ever been bullied</b>	334 (79.0)	413 (67.0)	<0.001
Verbally bullied (n=696)	308 (72.8%)	388 (63.0%)	0.001
Physically bullied (n=293)	154 (36.4%)	139 (22.6%)	<0.001
<b>Reasons for being bullied</b>			
I am inferior/ for fun	97 (29.0)	103 (24.9)	<0.001
Rataliation	63 (18.9)	48 (11.6)	
Jealousy	51 (15.3)	107 (25.9)	
Being diffirent	46 (13.8)	38 (9.2)	
Don't know	77 (23.1)	117 (28.3)	
<b>Frequency of being bullied</b>			
Twice or more a week	235 (70.4)	269 (65.1)	0.440
Once a week	44 (13.2)	65 (15.7)	
Once a amonth	29 (8.6)	46 (11.1)	
Once a year	26 (7.8)	33 (8.0)	

**Table 2: Impact of bullying on the well being of students by gender.**

	Male	Female	Total	P value
<b>Affect studies</b>				
No	140 (41.9)	168 (40.7)	308 (41.20)	0.015
Sometimes	165 (49.4)	229 (55.4)	394(52.7)	
Always	29 (8.7)	16 (3.9)	45 (4.3)	
<b>Affect health</b>				
Yes	62 (18.6)	73 (17.7)	135 (18.1)	0.754
No	272 (81.4)	340 (82.3)	612 (81.9)	
<b>Avoid school</b>				
Never	272 (81.4)	348 (84.3)	620 (83.0)	0.336
Once a week	49 (14.7)	56 (13.6)	105 (14.1)	
>once a week	13 (3.9)	9 (2.2)	22 (2.9)	
<b>Psychological effect</b>				
Not upset	73 (21.9)	79 (19.1)	152 (20.3)	0.495

Upset	206 (61.7)	255 (61.8)	461 (61.7)	
Very upset	55 (16.4)	79 (19.1)	134 (17.9)	

## **VI. STRENGHTS AND LIMITATIONS**

Previous studies that looked into bullying in schools are mainly focusing the lower grades. This study looked into the prevalence of bullying in the higher secondary standard and no other studies have been carried out in this region so far. The limitations include self-reported data, as there might be subjective differences. Also one-time measurement might not reflect the true extent owing to changes in students' behavior over time. Furthermore, factors that are associated with bullying were not evaluated and may form the basis for further research.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

Bullying and victimization are widespread phenomena in secondary school and higher grades of elementary school. This study shows that the prevalence of bullying in higher secondary school is as high as 92.4% affirming that it is not a problem only for lower grades but rather continuing in higher grades too. Males are more likely to be a victim and a bully. Bullying makes more than one-third of the victims feel upset and affects the studies in a small proportion of students all the time. Our findings suggest the need for prevention and interventions to look out for the possible adverse impacts of bullying.

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