The Effectiveness of School-Based Anti-Bullying Programs in Crime Prevention Crime through Proactive Problem-Solving Strategies

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Abstract

Schools, as formal institutions created by society, serve functions far beyond academic instruction, including fostering social and moral development through student interaction. Socialisation—through behaviours, attitudes, and communication—shapes children's early social experiences. However, while some teasing among peers may be considered normal when harmless, a more severe form known as bullying can lead to significant physical and psychological harm. This study aims to investigate the various types and prevalence of bullying among male and female secondary school students. Moreover, the researchers designed and implemented a bullying prevention program and assessed its effectiveness within the school setting. Given the limited scope of existing research on the extent and understanding of bullying among school children, this study contributes significantly to the literature by not only measuring bullying incidents but also exploring the role of adults—teachers, parents, and elders—in intervening and preventing bullying behaviours. The findings offer valuable insights into developing comprehensive strategies for creating safer school environments.

Keywords: School bullying, Socialisation, Psychological trauma, Bullying prevention program, Secondary school students, Teacher and parental intervention, Peer interaction.

Introduction

School is a formal institution shaped and established by society to serve multiple functions beyond mere academic instruction. It is a space where students not only acquire knowledge and language skills but also develop social and moral values through regular interaction. The school environment offers students a platform to engage with one another, facilitating the exchange of

ideas, opinions, resources, and experiences. These exchanges form the foundation of a child's early social experiences.

The process by which a person acquires the attitudes, behaviours, and values of a group is referred to as socialisation. Children are socialised via the use of a variety of signals, including attitudes, behaviours, verbal and non-verbal communication, and other forms of communication, which are presented to them within the context of an educational system.[1] It is possible for pupils to vocally and non-verbally mistreat or taunt one another when they go through the process of socialisation. When it does not have any negative effects on anyone's physical or mental health, teasing may be regarded to be something that is thought to be normal.

However, when a few students attempt to torment another student, this is not considered to be teasing but rather something that should be handled seriously and is referred to as bullying. Not only may it cause bodily pain, but it can also cause psychological trauma to a person.[2] Within the scope of the current study, researchers attempted to investigate various types of bullying as well as the degree to which bullying occurs among males and females.[3]

Additionally, researchers developed a bullying prevention program and investigated the efficiency of the program among secondary school students. [4] Limited research has been undertaken to investigate the extent of bullying in schools, and even fewer studies have been conducted to investigate the comprehension of bullying in schools. The present study may be one of the very few studies of its kind that investigates the amount of bullying among secondary school children. Additionally, the intervention of adults such as teachers, parents, and elders to prevent bullying and the engagement of students in bullying is explored in this research study.

The Role of Educators and Parents in Bullying

To ensure that no kid is permitted to emerge as a bully, teachers need to maintain a close check on the classroom where they are teaching.[5] To guarantee that all of the pupils have access to equal opportunities, it is necessary to take such steps. It is important to provide additional attention to students who may not be as successful in their schoolwork or in other activities. This

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[1] "Menesini E, Salmivalli C. Bullying in schools: the state of knowledge and effective interventions. Psychol Health Med. 2017;22(S1):240–53."

[2] "World Health Organisation. Regional Office for Europe: spotlight on adolescent health and well-being. Findings from the 2017/2018 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey in Europe and Canada. 2020. Available from: https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/332104"

[3] Ibid

[4] "Kaess M. Bullying: peer-to-peer maltreatment with severe consequences for child and adolescent mental health. Eur Child Adolesc Psychiatry. 2018;27(8):945–7."

[5] "Moore SE, Norman RE, Suetani S, Thomas HJ, Sly PD, Scott JG. Consequences of bullying victimization in childhood and adolescence: a systematic review and meta-analysis. World J Psychiatry. 2017;7(1):60–76."

difficulty may be considerably mitigated by instructors who maintain constant vigilance and provide mentorship.

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) was given the directive to establish an anti-bullying committee in each and every one of its connected schools.[6] This was done after the organisation saw an increase in the number of instances of pupils being bullied both physically and online. In addition, the CBSE has suggested taking severe punishment against anybody who is proven to be bullying.[7] A written warning or even the student's expulsion from the school might fall under this category.

As a result of the transition from extended families to nuclear families and the lack of grandparents who are present in the house to love and guide the children, the duty of raising children falls on the shoulders of the parents. On the other hand, as a parent, there are a number of things that one may do to assist in turning the situation around. For example, parents should be the ones to engage in activities such as chatting, sharing, and spending time together as a family. It is essential that parents maintain a close eye on their children's behaviour. In the event that the child is consistently depressed or anxious, if one observes that the child's school or play clothes are torn, if it is observed that the child is lying, if the child is absent from school quite frequently, if the child avoids the school bus, if there is an increasing demand for more pocket money, these are the typical signs of a child being subjected to bullying. When a kid consistently presents with issues related to their appetite or is anxious about coming to school, it is important for parents and teachers to take into consideration the possibility that bullying is a contributing cause.[8]

When dealing with children, it is important to demonstrate empathy and make certain that children who are bullied get the necessary counselling help at the appropriate time. It is important for parents to improve their communication with their children so that concerns about bullying may be brought up in discussion, particularly when the children are younger. Talking about their worries should be something that they are comfortable doing, and these talks may be a part of a larger discourse about respecting the ideas and diversity of other people. When your kid tells you that they are being bullied or harassed, you should make sure you believe them. If a kid is a member of one of the high-risk categories that are more likely to be bullied, then the parents of that child should be extra cautious about these warning signals. Among them are children who

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[6] "Central Board of Secondary Education, 'Violence and Ragging in Schools Affiliated to CBSE' (Circular No. 24, 14 July 2009) https://www.cbse.gov.in/circulars/cir24-2009.pdf accessed 21 April 2025."

[7] Ibid

[8] "Jantzer V, Ossa FC, Eppelmann L, Parzer P, Resch F, Kaess M. Under the skin: does psychiatric outcome of bullying victimization in school persist over time? A prospective intervention study. J Child Psychol Psychiatry. 2022;63(6):646–54."

are overweight or have impairments, as well as those who identify as homosexual, gay, bisexual, or transgender. It is the responsibility of teachers and counsellors at schools to ensure that they create an environment in which students feel at ease and confident enough to speak out if they see another student being harassed. The issue of bullying has to be addressed, and the people who bully should also be recommended to get counselling as part of the proposed sanctions.

Types of School-Based Anti-Bullying Programmes

Curriculum-Based   Interventions

There are a variety of meta-analyses that compile the results of several studies on anti-bullying programs. Assessments in elementary and secondary schools from many nations are part of these meta-analyses. While the results are varied, they do show that anti-bullying initiatives have the potential to reduce bullying in schools.

On average, anti-bullying programs reduce victimisation by 17–20% and bullying practices by 20–23%, according to the most thorough meta-analysis of anti-bullying programs that has been carried out so far.[9] Similarly, it was discovered that victimisation and bullying were significantly reduced after participating in anti-bullying programs. Additionally, anti-bullying programs significantly decrease victimisation.[10] In their 2014 study, Evans, Fraser, and Cotter found that half of the anti-bullying programs they evaluated significantly reduced bullying behaviours, and 67% significantly reduced victimisation.[11]

Peer   Mentoring   and   Support   Groups

The importance of peer mentorship programs in improving students' mental health and reducing instances of bullying in schools is becoming more acknowledged. To help children feel appreciated and understood, these programs use the power of peer interactions to build a supportive network.[12] A school's culture may be positively affected by peer mentors who encourage healthy behaviours and decision-making by creating opportunities for pleasant interactions and providing assistance. Structured peer mentorship programs allow more seasoned students to guide and encourage their less experienced peers while also serving as good role models for the latter. By encouraging constructive actions and choices, these initiatives hope to lessen bullying, strengthen kids' social skills, and create a feeling of belonging in the school.

Teacher Training and Sensitization

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[9] "Gaffney H, Ttofi MM, Farrington DP. Evaluating the effectiveness of school-bullying prevention programs: an updated meta-analytical review. Aggress Violent Behav. 2019;45:111–33."
[10] Ibid

[11] "CB Evans, MW Fraser and KL Cotter, 'The Effectiveness of School-Based Bullying Prevention Programs: A Meta-Analysis' (2014) 45 *Children and Youth Services Review* 100, 102."
[12] Ibid

Choosing outcomes, content, learning, and teaching experiences (e.g., methods, techniques, and materials) is an important part of developing an in-service teacher training program to prevent peer bullying. Following this, organising and evaluating these experiences will show how effective they were in reaching the goals. The program's creators made sure it was adaptable and welcoming of all perspectives in order to fulfil its mission of educating educators to prevent and respond to bullying in the classroom. They emphasised the importance of social justice, democracy, equality, and social peace and were open to suggestions for improvement.

This program for in-service teachers was built using problem-centered curriculum design. Social and environmental elements do not exist apart from the learning process, which is integrated, dynamic, and constructive "...empowers learners to research, integrate theory and practice, and apply knowledge and skills to develop a viable solution to a defined problem" is the essence of problem-centered curriculum design.

Discussed under this framework are ideas on the sociological viewpoint on child development, violence, and peer bullying, as well as school climate and exposure to bullying. Staying together, building a peaceful, safe, and meaningful society, democratic education, behaviour and classroom management, conflict resolution methods, inclusive education, and effective bullying intervention programs are all topics covered within the said strategy.

Teachers may take the lead in preventing bullying and finding solutions by participating in such training programmes, which focus on developing skills that can be used in a real classroom setting. Teachers' professional development requirements were considered in this regard throughout the curriculum's learning and teaching component design.

In order to solve the difficulties that schools are experiencing, educators need a new pedagogical and political vocabulary. In this regard, the critical approach outlined by Giroux (2004) has informed the development of this training program.[13] To rephrase, the overarching goal of this training program is to provide teachers with the information and abilities necessary to combat bullying in the classroom and school as a whole, as well as to establish a welcoming and safe learning environment for all students.

Parent   Involvement   Programmes
The most thorough model for family-school cooperation was created by Epstein and colleagues.[14] Epstein and van Voorhis extended the paradigm for school counsellors. The researchers also found that the model improved school discipline.

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[13] "Beckman L, Svensson M. The cost-effectiveness of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program: results from a modelling study. J Adolesc. 2015;45(1):127–37."
[14] "Kolbert, J.B., Schultz, D. and Crothers, L.M., 2014. Bullying Prevention and the Parent Involvement Model. Journal of School Counseling, 12(7), p.n7."

In a study conducted[15], it was shown that middle school bullying decreased significantly when parents volunteered, which suggests that Epstein and colleagues' strategy might be beneficial in combating this widespread issue. According to the parent involvement model, there are three interconnected settings—the home, the school, and the community—that have an impact on children and their connections with others. What we call "the internal model" are the ways in which people's family, school, and community lives interact and shape one another. The theory's premise is that students' accomplishment is improved when various external contexts—such as family, school, and community—work together to boost student performance. In contrast, the external model consists of students' actual living environments. Both the institutional level (such as when a school establishes a mechanism for parents to check homework assignments) and the individual level (such as during a parent-teacher meeting) see interactions across the three settings.

Technology-Based Interventions

Given that most incidents of bullying among middle school children take place on school grounds, it is imperative that measures be implemented to combat this problem.[16] While studies have shown that school-based interventions can reduce bullying and improve students' social and emotional outcomes, most of the research on bullying has focused on urban youth, so the results may not apply to schools in rural areas. There may also be disparities between urban and rural areas that affect the incidence of bullying and the efficacy of preventative efforts. In low-income or rural areas, where funding is tight, staff may have to juggle multiple roles (e.g., teacher-librarian or teacher-administrator) to make ends meet. Further, schools in remote regions may be asked to offer mental health services due to a lack of other options.

Additional demands on instructors, restricted access to training, inadequate financing, and a lack of mental health specialists on staff are all obstacles to the implementation of school-wide programs that aim to address mental health comprehensively. There are a number of obstacles that make it harder for rural schools to access and implement bullying prevention programs compared to their urban counterparts. These include a smaller tax base, which makes it harder to fund programs, high training costs due to transportation needs for expert trainers, school closures, staff burnout and overload, a lack of local expertise in bullying prevention, and frequent staff turnover. It has also been found that parents in rural areas see bullying as a major emotional and behavioural issue for their children, and they also note that a lack of school programs is a major risk factor for juvenile vulnerability.

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[15] Ibid

[16] "Smith, P.K. and Brain, P., 2000. Bullying in schools: Lessons from two decades of research. Aggressive Behavior: Official Journal of the International Society for Research on Aggression, 26(1), pp.1-9."

Case Studies of Successful Models

One of the most effective school-based interventions is a teacher-led program that tries to educate people on how bystanders may encourage bullying, make them more sympathetic towards victims, and teach them how to protect themselves and others from bullying. The goals are accomplished by having students, under the guidance of teachers, participate in activities like group discussions, presentations, visual representations of cyberbullying through pictures, figures, and characters, short films, assignments with hands-on learning activities, and a computer game where they can practise anti-bullying skills in a virtual setting.

Members of the school community who have received KiVa training talk to the bullies when incidences are reported, offering them advice on how to stop being so bad.[17] To maintain program quality and consistency in instructor behaviour, KiVa additionally supplies materials and schedules meetings with staff to provide detailed instructions for curricular sessions. With the help of the program's handbook, educators may create their own classes. Parents may find helpful information on the many types of bullying as well as suggestions for how to avoid it in a parent-led handbook. Additionally, it promotes a collaborative effort between parents, schools, and educators to combat bullying. To make it apparent that the school is a KiVa school and that bullying situations will not be permitted, visible insignia, logos, imprints on instructors' vests or shirts, and posters are employed. The premise of OBPP, one of the world's most researched and effective anti-bullying initiatives, is that bullying has no place in a child's everyday life. The program has grown and extended from its initial purpose to address teenage aggressiveness in online environments in addition to school violence.[18] Collecting baseline data allows for program targeting and individualisation of treatments based on needs assessment, as is the case with other effective interventions.

As a first step, the OBPP encourages school personnel to be more caring and invested in their students' lives, to enforce policies that discourage aggressive conduct, and to set a good example for their pupils. Furthermore, school personnel are educated and responsible for keeping tabs on "hot spots" where bullying is occurring so that they may step in promptly when necessary. Staff training also includes methods for recognising bullying situations and providing counselling to anyone involved, including victims, parents, and those who perpetrated the bullying. Implementing OBPP makes school staff meetings and group conversations about bullying and associated preventive measures a regular part of school life.[19]

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[17] "Juvonen, J. and Graham, S., 2014. Bullying in schools: The power of bullies and the plight of victims. Annual review of psychology, 65(1), pp.159-185."

[18] "Ttofi, M. and Farrington, D., 2009. What works in preventing bullying: Effective elements of anti-bullying programmes. Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research, 1(1), pp.13-24."

[19] Ibid

Teachers of youth and children should regularly convene their classes to go over objectives, establish norms, and engage in activities including role playing, debate, and both big and small group work. Staff members decide on meeting themes as part of an awareness program that aims to show different kinds of bullying and raise knowledge about how to respect others, deal with stress, solve problems, and use positive and negative consequences consistently. Every school should have a Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee (with 8 to 15 members) that is in charge of anti-bullying policy endorsement, staff training, awareness event planning, and school monitoring plan enhancement. Community involvement in preventative and awareness initiatives is also aimed at via teen leadership programs and after-school family evenings.

Evaluation and Effectiveness

There is no single benchmark for evaluating the effectiveness of school based bullying programmes. A comprehensive set of indicators must be relied on in order to arrive at a conclusion pertaining to the overall effectiveness of such programmes. The aim of these programmes is not to achieve a mechanical reduction in statistics. The numbers aim at ensuring a shift in the attitudes that rationalise bullying and create environments conducive to the insensitivity spread by the actions of certain children.[20] School records, surveys and anonymous reporting tools play a vital role in tracking the number of bullying-related cases. A decrease in the frequency of such incidents signifies that the intervention is effectively curbing harmful behaviours.

Furthermore, student satisfaction with such initiatives is yet another criterion. Just like the CAG Carries out policy audits of government initiatives, the anti bullying programmes in schools must be subjected to feedback based improvement initiatives. Afterall, if the ultimate beneficiaries of such programmes are not satisfied, there remains no point initiating such a programme in the first place. If students feel empowered to speak up without fear of retaliation and perceive the program as a positive force, then the program can be considered effective from their perspective.

Furthermore, the climate of the school also plays a huge role in determining the effectiveness of such programmes. If the school climate is positive, inclusive, safe and is characterised by mutual respect, the anti bullying programmes are often considered to be effective. This evaluation can be carried out through surprise checks, teacher reports and parent feedback. When students feel safe and respected, it indicates that the intervention has contributed to the creation of an environment where bullying is less likely to thrive.[21]

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[20] "Jones, J.R. and Augustine, S.M., 2015. Creating an anti-bullying culture in secondary schools: Characterists to consider when constructing appropriate anti-bullying programs. *American Secondary Education*, pp.73-84."

[21] Ibid

Recommendations and Way Forward

To effectively combat bullying and ensure a lasting cultural shift in schools, a strategic, multi-faceted approach is necessary. This approach should not only involve direct interventions but also include systemic changes that promote long-term sustainability. The following recommendations outline key steps that can contribute to the eradication of bullying in schools and the creation of safe and nurturing learning environments for all students.

Policy-level Changes

Comprehensive and uniform anti-bullying laws that require obvious, consistent, and enforceable rules for schools throughout the nation are urgently needed at the policy level. This policy should stress the need of a whole-school strategy to bullying prevention, so guaranteeing that anti-bullying efforts are included into the more general framework of educational rights and school governance.[22] Such laws should call on schools to develop and carry out bullying prevention plans involving compulsory teacher and staff training as well as student and parent involvement initiatives. Furthermore, the policy should guarantee responsibility by requiring regular audits of program efficacy and bullying occurrences as well as a defined reporting system for staff members and kids to follow.

National rules for handling bullying in educational institutions, like to those established by the CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education), should also be required for all school boards. These policies should address a broad spectrum of bullying-related concerns including prevention, intervention, reporting, and local law enforcement participation in serious situations. This policy framework would help to make anti-bullying initiatives more consistent and simplified across schools by guaranteeing a consistent approach.[23]

Integrating Life Skills and Empathy in School Curriculum

Including life skills education into the school curriculum is one of the most powerful long-term solutions to handle bullying.[24] Reducing the frequency of bullying may be greatly influenced by life skills like empathy, conflict resolution, emotional control, and communication. Significantly lowering the probability of bullying may come from teaching children from an early age about understanding and controlling their emotions, the value of kindness and respect, and how to settle disputes peacefully. Activities that promote empathy, group discussions, role-playing exercises,

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[22] "Ryan, W. and Smith, J.D., 2009. Antibullying programs in schools: How effective are evaluation practices?. *Prevention Science*, *10*, pp.248-259."

[23] "Stevens, V., De Bourdeaudhuij, I. and Van Oost, P., 2000. Bullying in Flemish schools: An evaluation of anti-bullying intervention in primary and secondary schools. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *70*(2), pp.195-210."

[24] Ibid

and conflict resolution initiatives may help to create understanding and inclusiveness, therefore reducing the likelihood of bullying.

Including such skills in the fundamental curriculum not only provides students with useful tools for managing social interactions but also creates a culture of respect within the school. By enabling kids to be good impacts on their classmates rather than passive spectators or participants in bullying, this proactive strategy may significantly change things.[25]

Strengthening Grievance Redressal Mechanisms

Establishing efficient grievance redressal systems enabling students to report bullying occurrences securely and privately helps to fight bullying significantly. These tools should be readily available, have obvious procedures for lodging complaints, and make sure students' issues are treated seriously and handled right away.[26] Schools should have a committed committee or counsellor in charge of handling allegations of bullying, carrying out investigations, and following up on results to guarantee responsibility.

Furthermore, the complaint redressal mechanism should be student-friendly, thereby guaranteeing that students, particularly younger ones or those from underprivileged areas, feel comfortable and empowered to speak out against bullying without the fear of retribution. Regular feedback sessions and surveys may guarantee the system is operating efficiently and aid to highlight problem areas.[27]

Importantly, grievance redressal should not be limited to reporting bullying but should also include guaranteeing victim assistance, including counselling services, peer support programs, and educational modifications where required.

Mandatory Reporting and Monitoring by State Education Departments

State education agencies should supervise required reporting and monitoring systems guaranteeing the efficacy of anti-bullying programs. Every school should be obliged to notify appropriate authorities of occurrences of bullying, using well-defined procedures for tracking the number and kind of bullying episodes throughout time. These studies may provide insightful information on patterns in bullying, hence guiding legislators to decide on future measures.

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[25] "Ttofi, M.M. and Farrington, D.P., 2011. Effectiveness of school-based programs to reduce bullying: A systematic and meta-analytic review. *Journal of experimental criminology*, 7, pp.27-56."

[26] "Smith, J.D., Cousins, J.B. and Stewart, R., 2005. Antibullying interventions in schools: Ingredients of effective programs. *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation*, pp.739-762."

[27] Ibid

Furthermore, state education agencies should monitor how anti-bullying policies and initiatives are carried out in schools to guarantee they are not only in place but also actively enforced. These initiatives should be periodically assessed, and schools should be responsible for fully resolving the problem of bullying. The information gathered by means of these reports might guide national policies and guarantee that initiatives to avoid bullying are regularly successful in many distinct areas.

Collaborations with NGOs and Mental Health Professionals

Working with mental health experts and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) may improve the efficacy of school-based anti-bullying projects. Often knowledgeable in handling delicate social concerns like bullying, NGOs may provide schools useful resources like training seminars, awareness campaigns, and counselling services. Many NGOs also work to promote emotional well-being and mental health, two important elements in the prevention and reaction to bullying.

Including mental health professionals—including school counsellors and psychologists—is also crucial to provide pupils the emotional and psychological help they need to recover from the consequences of bullying. These experts can advise both offenders and victims, hence assisting them in coping with trauma and behavioural concerns. Mental health professionals can help educators see early indicators of bullying and provide advice on how to manage challenging circumstances in the class.

Moreover, collaborations with these outside companies may provide schools with new ideas and innovative intervention techniques. By offering workshops aimed at parents as well as children, NGOs can help to raise knowledge of bullying prevention and so strengthen the need of preserving a safe and encouraging school environment.

Conclusion

The future of anti-bullying programs lies in creating an integrated, inclusive approach that involves the entire school community, including students, teachers, parents, and external professionals. By establishing clear policies, equipping students with critical life skills, and ensuring that support systems are in place, schools can create an environment that discourages bullying and promotes healthy interpersonal relationships. Additionally, government and non-governmental organizations should collaborate to build a comprehensive framework that aligns with the unique cultural and regional contexts of different schools.

The key to success lies in the continuity of effort, long-term commitment, and the involvement of all stakeholders. Only by addressing bullying from multiple fronts—policy, curriculum, teacher training, student engagement, and professional support—can we hope to create schools where every child feels safe, respected, and valued.