

Attitude and Opinion towards Bullying along with Gender Difference among Adolescents in School

Irin Das^{1*} | Sampreety Gogoi²

¹M.Sc., Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Community Science, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, India.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Community Science, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, India.

*Corresponding Author: irin-2084001@pau.edu

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ABSTRACT

The present study mainly focused on the attitude of bullying among adolescence in school. The primary objective of the study was to see (i) The attitude of the adolescents about bullying (ii) To see the opinion towards bullying (iii) To see the gender difference of attitude towards bullying. The study was conducted in Jorhat, Assam; India among schools. A standardised bully survey questionnaire was used which was used for collection of data. Data was taken from a total of 118 students, equal in girls and boys. The questionnaire included thoughts about bullying (attitude and opinion). There has been found that there is no significant gender difference in attitude toward bullying in adolescences. We distributed the attitude towards bullying between high, low and average. And found that the level of average has the highest percentage. So, it has been found that there is pro-bullying attitude in school. The respondent's perception of bullying was analysed whether bullying is a problem or not. A higher percentage of students said yes and a lower percentage said no.

Keywords: Bullying, Adolescents, School, Attitude.

Introduction

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance (1993, Olewus). A new UNESCO (2019) report confirms that 32 percent of students are bullied at school, which proves that bullying is a major problem worldwide. Menon (2017) made a study at 15 locations across the country and found that 42 percent of students of class 4 to 8 and 36 percent of students from class 9 to 12 said that, they faced harassment (were made fun of, bullied, teased, insulted and ridiculed) by their peer group in schools. 'Bullying is deliberately a hurtful behaviour which is repeated over a period of time'. Bullying includes actions such as threatening others, spreading out rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally and excluding someone from group intentionally. There are mainly four types of bullying: physical bullying, verbal bullying, social bullying and cyber bullying.

Research and experiences have shown that bullying is a serious problem and has long-term implications for the involved students, their families, peers, and also the surrounding community. Bullying has got immense consequences like quitting of school, depression, anxiety, insomnia, heightened vigilance, persistent fear of re-experiencing the bullying etc. Bullying students usually suffer from social stress, loneliness, isolation, physical illness, and lack of self-confidence. Most of the students face bullying in one way or the other in their lifetime. It occurs in almost all schools, and is more prevalent than what parents and teachers think. Bullying tends to increase during middle school, peaking at around age 12, and then it generally decreases steadily (Austin, et al. 2012).

Material and Methods

Research Design

The research which is conducted is exploratory research. Exploratory research is defined as research which is used to investigate a problem and have a better understanding of the problem.

Sampling Procedure

For conducting the study four staged sampling design was adopted. The study was conducted in the Jorhat district of Assam.

- **Selection of District:** Out of thirty-three districts in the state of Assam, Jorhat was selected conveniently for the research work.
- **Selection of Blocks:** For the study, Jorhat block was purposively selected from the Jorhat district of Assam.
- **Selection of Schools:** At first, the names of all the co-education schools were collected from Jorhat Block. From the list of all 54 co-education high schools, a total of five schools comprising of both Assamese and English medium school were selected randomly among the various schools of Jorhat block.
- **Selection of Sample:** A total sample of 118 respondents was selected by the method of probability proportional to size (PPS) from the selected schools. Before selecting the respondents, permission was taken from the higher authorities and selection criteria was informed. The required sample was drawn with the following criteria:
 - The selection sample were from the age groups of 12-14 years and 14-16 years.
 - The willingness of the students to respond.

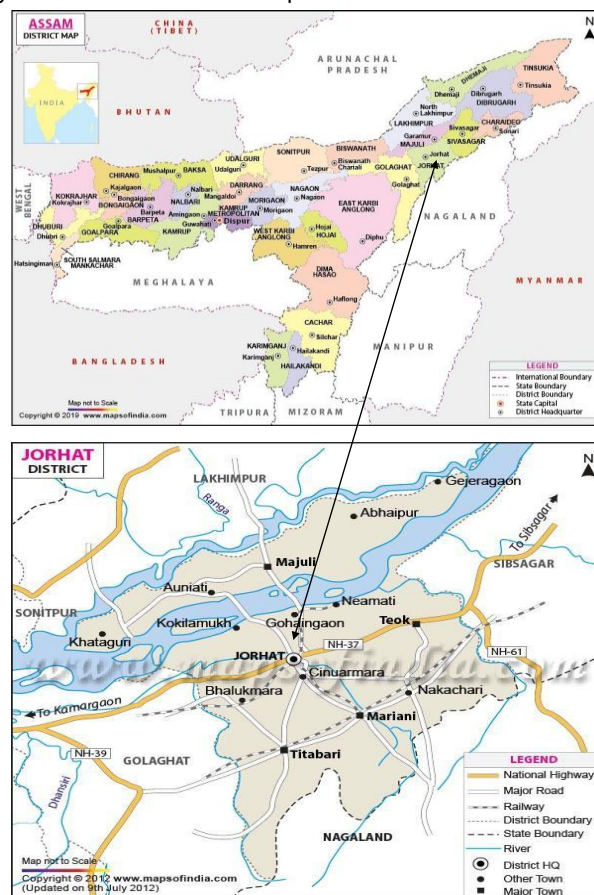


Fig. 1: Map Showing Location of the Study

Tools used for the study Questionnaire

A questionnaire was constructed to collect the background information of the respondents having name, age, sex, address, ordinal position, number of siblings, education qualification of the child, parents and guardian, marital status of the parents, type of family, occupation of the parents and guardian and their monthly income etc.

A standardized tool known as the Bully Survey developed by researchers, Swearer (2001) and team from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, America was used to assess the adolescent's responses towards prevalence, causes and gender difference in attitude towards bullying. This scale is applicable to the youth of 10-18 years.

There are four parts to this survey:

- Part A - When the child was bullied by others
- Part B - When the child saw other students getting bullied
- Part C - When the child bullied others
- Part D - Child thoughts / attitude about bullying

Results and Discussion

The gender difference in attitude towards bullying

Table 1: Attitudes towards bullying

Level	Total samples	
	Frequency	Percentage
High	19	16.1
Average	81	68.64
Low	18	15.25

From the table 5 it can be depicted that 16.1 percent have high attitude towards bullying, followed by 68.64 percent average and 15.25 percent low. Since the level of average has the highest percentage, so it can be concluded that there is pro-bullying attitude among adolescents in schools.

Table 2: Difference in attitude of bullying among adolescents based on gender

Respondents	Mean	SD	Z-value	Table value
Girls	40.81	7.47	-27.36	1.96
Boys	39.4	7.99		

It was seen from table 6 that the calculated value of Z as -27.36, which being lesser than that of the table value 1.96. Hence, it can be revealed from the findings that, there is no significant gender difference in attitude towards bullying among adolescents in schools.

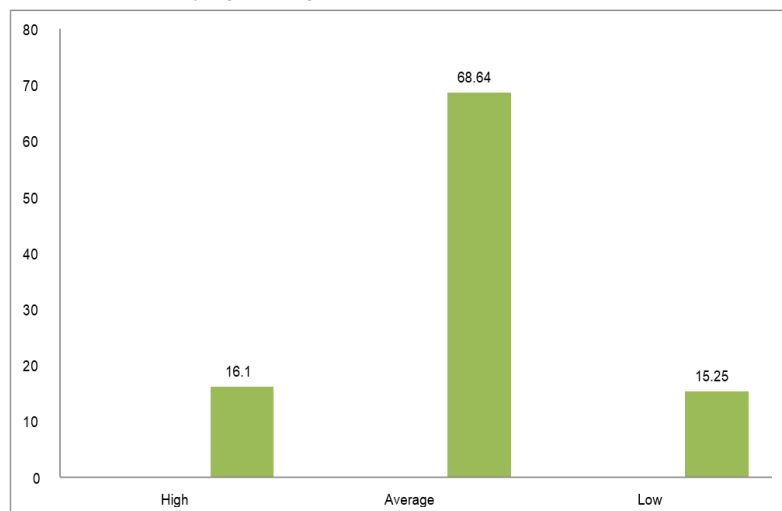


Fig. 2: Attitudes Towards Bullying

Table 3: Responses towards bullying as a problem in the school

Bullying as a problem	Responses	Total samples n=118	
		Frequency	Percentage
Is bullying a problem in school	Yes	71	60.2
	No	47	39.8
Should the school worry about bullying	Yes	86	72.9
	No	32	27.1
Has bullying changed in the last year	Yes	29	24.6
	No	89	75.4

From the table 7 the respondent's perception towards bullying was analyzed as, whether bullying is a problem for them, 60.2 percent said yes and 39.8 percent said no and when the respondent were asked, do they think that schools should worry about bullying 72.9 percent said yes and 27.1 percent said no, when they were asked, has bullying changed in their school in the last year 24.6 percent said yes and 75.4 percent said no. But when the respondents were asked, what do you think has caused that change nothing was revealed by the respondent.

Attitudes towards Bullying

From the table (1) it can be depicted that majority, 68.64 percent adolescents have pro-bullying attitude at school because students normally think that such type of behavior is normal and they do not realize that they are doing wrong. Adolescents who usually bully others try to control or dominate others. They often have been prone to bullying themselves and they like to experience the same on someone who is submissive, easily frightened, or have less friend circle. Victims might often be smaller in size or younger than the bully, with low self-esteem, usually have anxiety or depression and might have faced hard time for defending themselves. Boulton et al. (2002) investigated attitudes toward bullying as they had been related to certain types of bullying in 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th graders with 170 samples, where high scores represented attitudes against bullying.

Difference in Attitude of Bullying among Adolescents based on Gender

It was seen from table (2) that as the value of Z is lesser than the table value, so no significant gender difference in attitude towards bullying was found, because generally both the gender shows bully behavior in a different pattern. Boys generally tend to use physical power or give threats, regardless to any gender of their victim. Girls usually bully verbally, to another girl as their target. Bullying is also done been in online chat rooms, through e-mails and on social networking sites, as being reported. Conclusions made about gender differences for bullying are not accurate as investigated by Craven (2014). Boulton, et al (2002) did not find any gender differences in his study done on 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th class students from a semi-rural place in the United Kingdom. Hoover et al. (1992) did a study on 207 Midwestern middle and high school students and did not find any gender differences in victimization; they also found that 14.2% of male students and 14.4% of female students who were the victim of bullying told that the bullying was severe. Crick and Grotpeter (1995) concluded that for both girls and boys no difference was found in case of overt and relational forms of aggression.

Bullying as a Problem in the School for the Adolescents

From the table (3) the respondent's perception towards bullying was analyzed as, whether bullying is a problem for them, 60.2 percent said yes, because bullying can be either direct or indirect and it make one feel insecure and it has impacted both on mental and emotions which will make one feel unaccepted, lonely, angry and withdrawal.

When the respondent was asked, do they think that schools should worry about bullying 72.9 percent said yes. In this regard it is the responsibility of the school to establish a school culture that is clearly prone to learning and where everyone receives and communicate clear messages that school is a place of learning where violence is not entertained and it will be neither accepted nor expected, which will be a powerful step for bullying prevention.

When the adolescents were asked, has bullying changed in their school in the last year 75.4 percent said no. This clearly indicates that bullying prevails in the school from many years. Bullying prevails usually where there is no adult's surveillance. Bullying prevention needs to be main aspect of a school system, it needs to be planned properly.

But when the respondents were asked, what do you think has caused that change nothing was revealed by the respondent. The respondents were also requested to write any other ideas they have about bullying and being bullied but none of them expressed their views. Most adolescents expressed that bullying is a problem but no one likes to talk about it freely.

Conclusion

Children and young people who bully others may think bullying as normal and acceptable. People who bully others are often motivated by the status and social power they can achieve through bullying. Some may bully others to compensate for what is happening to them and their own feelings of powerlessness. Bullying behavior can also be copied or imitated by others; all individuals have the potential to bully others or to be bullied.

Bullying is not normal and it should not be a part of life. Ignoring bullying or giving silent approval means it is just something that children and young people can do. Being bullied can result in feeling miserable and powerless, so the response of those around is important in making a change.

Swearer and Cary (2003) examined middle school student's attitudes and perceptions of bullying during their middle school years and it was found that their attitudes toward bullying became more supportive of bullying as students progressed through middle school.

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