

Bullying in schools essay

[Sociology](#), [Bullying](#)



Schoolbullying is defined as unwanted repeated abuse and discrimination towards another student. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 in 5 American schoolchildren were victims of some form of physical, emotional, or social bullying and 15% were cyberbullied in the previous year. In the United States, every state has been delegated the power to establish its own anti-bullying laws and programs, and every school is responsible for providing a safe education for every child. Bullying is an issue that students should be able to address, yet only 20% to 30% of students actually report it (CDC). In order to promote a school culture that can seek to eliminate bullying and cyberbullying, the United States should reform and establish more effective bullying laws, support more programs that can assist students, and encourage students to increase confidence and participation to stand up against bullying.

Currently, the United States has no official federal law to combat school bullying, but it mandates states to enact its own anti-bullying laws. The National Academies of Science Engineering and Medicine states, “ While all 50 states and the District of Colombia have adopted anti-bullying laws, there are significant differences in [the] content of these laws” (National Academies of Science Engineering and Medicine). Every state establishes its own reporting policy as well as whether or not to require risk groups protection, additional teacher training, parent intervention, and assistance of students outside the school setting. For example, the state of Georgia provides guidance to the bullied outside the school grounds, but North Carolina only recognizes bullying as an issue if it occurs in the school. The state of Georgia also requires parental notification, but Vermont has no rule

that requires the attention of the parent or guardian. These drastically different state policies result in inequalities among students in different U. S. states and opportunities in the anti-bullying epidemic. In order to be able to establish and reform prevention laws, bullying must become recognized as an issue for students.

Furthermore, the cause of harmful behavior between adolescents is reflective on a number of correlated factors. In one study, researchers described some bullies' actions " Students who were bullied by their peers before were more likely to bully others than those who were not bullied before" (Gardell, Guo, and Yang para. 26). Many bullies who were originally victims may continue to and repeat the same the actions inflicted in the past. Additionally, many school bullies may lack childhood support.

Researchers Bryan Sykes, Alex, Piquero, and Jason P. Giovanio concluded, " We consider the impact of social, economic, and educational disadvantages on the likelihood of being a bully" (Sykes, Piquero, & Giovanio 1907). They can come from an underprivileged and difficult life such as financial hardship, traumatic childhood experiences, strained family relationships, and domestic abuse. Typically, bullying involves disparity between positions of power and dominance. The U. S. Department of Health and Human Services describe student bullies often " use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others" (U. S. Depart. of Health and Human Services). The bully may feel a sense of superiority and choose to harm others in order to prove their sense of higher belonging among their classmates. As a result, power inequalities emerge due to contrasting characteristics.

On the other hand, victims can be perceived as inferior or abnormal by their peers. They tend to stand out from others and have qualities which make them different than the average student. Studies have positively correlated disabled students with bullying. Children with physical and mental disabilities are more likely to be harassed than their abled peers. Emerging research also shows Americans who are outside the healthy weight, as well as children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transsexual (LGBT), are more targeted. Researchers William Ash-Houchen and Celia Lo support “ results suggest that adolescents who are outside a normal body weight and those belonging to a sexual minority face increased risks of offline and co-occurring victimization” (Houchen & Lo para. 1). Overweight, underweight, and LGBT children do not fit in the typical norms of the student lifestyle. These traits can drive others to pick on them for being an outcast in school society which can lead to ostracism by their classmates. As a result, student harassment has been associated with a number of negative longitudinal effects.

Evidently, victims are affected by their health and education. The U. S. Department of Health and Human Services founded “ children and adolescents who have been bullied can experience negative psychological, physical, and academic effects” U. S. Depart. of Health and Human Services). Academically, victims are more likely to struggle in school performance and participation. Victims have a higher risk of mental illnesses and instability such as depression, anxiety, negative feelings of sorrow and hopelessness, low confidence, and thoughts of suicide; these mental instabilities can lead to actions such as self-harm, loss of interests and enjoyment in activities, drug

and alcohol abuse, criminal acts, and suicide attempts. The increased levels of negativestresscan put a toll on the adolescent such as sleeping problems, body pain, and immune and endocrine problems. In addition, bullying has been linked to the risk of adolescent suicides in the media.

Recently, the number of adolescent suicides has raised concerns for bullying after these children were allegedly victims of school bullying. Many are believing bullying can lead to students taking their own lives. According to CDC publication of The Relationship Between Bullying and Suicide, it claimed, “ youth who report any involvement with bullying behavior are more likely to report high levels of suicide-related behavior than youth who do not report any involvement with bullying behavior” (CDC 3). Although the epidemic is fairly recent, studies have positively correlated bullying with suicidal tendencies. This is especially true for students in risk groups who are more likely to be bullied than others. One solution is allowing psychiatriccommunicationwith students who have depression and are suicidal. Schools should also support all students. Not only is bullying injurious towards the bullied, but also it can result in adverse effects for the student who torments others.

Surprisingly, students who act either physically or mentally abusive towards other adolescents can also be detrimental towards well-being. Criminology professors Bryan Sykes, Alex, Piquero, and Jason P. Giovanio cited “ the physical and verbal behavior of bullies may carry over into adulthood, thereby placing such youth at risk of delinquency and criminal activity as adults” (Sykes, Piquero, & Giovanio1884). Bullies are more likely to commit

criminal activity and are more likely to be harmful to other people. Signs of aggression and misconduct at a young age can be a major factor in shaping the individual in their behavior in adult life. Bullying can condition the individual to perform the same disruptive actions as they grow up. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention determined, “ risks for both depression and suicide are higher among bullies and victims...being a bully is associated with alcohol and drug use” (CDC 470). Not only are bullies more likely to perform more risky activities like substances, but also they have a higher risk of facing psychological complications. In American education, several welfare programs and professionals are obligated for every student to use for his or her benefit; however, the established programs must be effective in their purpose in preventing or reducing bullying.

Despite the implementation of several national and local anti-bullying programs, these programs can have minuscule effects on assisting the youth. Bullying is an issue many people are unconfident or not knowledgeable to speak about. For example, a middle school student admits, ““ Yeah, I see kids get pushed around, picked on, [and] called rotten names at my school. Nobody stops it. It makes you feel bad inside. You can feel it in your stomach. Most of the time, I think I should do something, but it is like you are not supposed to’” (Lazarus and Pfohl 1). Majority of the students who report bullying in their schools are bystanders. While they do acknowledge its prevalence, students lack the expertise and confidence to help their peers. Students also omit from reporting being victimized themselves due to believing in a lack of reliable support or assistance from adults. As a result,

bullying may persist despite the current use of an anti-bullying method. Similarly, school educators struggle to understand bullying as an issue.

The National Association of School Psychologists reported “ bullying often occurs underneath their radar, teachers may grossly underestimate the amount of bullying that goes on in their schools... there is evidence that teachers are reluctant to intervene in bullying” (Lazarus and Pfohl 2). School professionals in some states lack proper training in bullying intervention. This lack of coordination results in an ineffective method that does little to no benefit towards ending aggressive student relationships. Developing an anti-bullying curriculum or program can educate students in understanding bullying and encourage them to notify an authority. This curriculum can also teach students to build appropriate relationships and discourage violence, offensive language, and ostracism towards each other; students need to develop respect for each regardless of identity. Teachers and other school professionals need additional training to be able to identify and end student oppression. Verbal and physical communication between adolescents must be monitored in order to control acceptable behavior.

However, opponents argue anti-bullying laws and programs may violate an individual’s right to free speech. Preventing verbal bullying requires a limitation appropriate language. While the United States citizens are obligated under the protection of the First Amendment, law professor Emily Suski cited “ the Court concluded that schools have even more authority under the First Amendment to suppress student speech than when the school is merely tolerating student speech” (728). While the United States

recognizes the amendment for every American student, the Supreme Court ultimately determined that schools limiting the students' speech do not violate the amendment. The Court determined schools have the responsibility in protecting students' civil rights even if it means they must suppress language.

Overall, bullying is an epidemic that continues to negatively affect schoolchildren in the United States. Preventing student bullying requires a number of proposed solutions which include new legislation for state anti-bullying laws in the United States, establishing effective prevention programs, and increase overall school and national awareness to encourage students and educators to take action. While the freedom of speech should not be withheld, the speech and actions should be controlled to prevent bullying. For the students, teachers, and other people in the school setting, ensuring a safe environment would be beneficiary for everyone, and eliminating bullying can promote that goal. Change in American society is done to better the livelihoods and outcomes for people. By improving student relationships and interactions, education can be changed for the better for American students.