

# Depression in relationship to bullying psychology essay



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The purpose of this research paper is to examine qualitatively the correlation between depression and suicide in relationship to bullying. Significant research has been conducted using surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and quantitative data has been supplied to explore this recent phenomenon among today's children and adolescents. The results of this data indicate there may be a distinct correlation between bullying and cases of suicide.

## Introduction

The affects of bullying can lead to depression and suicide in today's youth and adolescents. Among school-aged children, bullying is now recognized as a major public health problem in the Western world. Recently, a lot of attention has been placed on the issue of bullying in schools not only in the United States, but other countries as well. Dan Olweus, an internationally known expert on bullying, states the definition of bullying is comprised of three important components: aggressive behavior that involves unwanted, negative actions; a pattern of behavior repeated over time; and an imbalance of power or strength (Olweus). Bullying can be summed up into four general categories: direct physical (E. g., any type of physical attack/assault), direct verbal (E. g., teasing, threats, insults), indirect relational (E. g., spreading nasty rumors, social exclusion), and cyber bullying (E. g., bullying through an electronic medium) (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

Suicidal behaviors affect millions of teenagers each year, indicating another public health problem. Media reports of children driven to suicide from bullying at school have highlighted the serious negative mental health

consequences of bullying. Suicide is a conscious and deliberate act that ends ones own life. Suicidal ideation is ones thoughts about how to kill themselves. This can range from a consideration, to a plan, to an attempt (Nordqvist, 2010). Experience with bullying is one factor that has been linked to suicidal ideation. This has been supported through research showing how experience with peer harassment contributes to precursors to suicidal thoughts and behaviors such as: depression, hopelessness, decreased self worth, and loneliness. A lot of research has been done to determine the relationship between bullying and suicidal ideation and with great confidence it can be said that a strong relationship exists (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

A new term found in literature unfortunately is “ Bullicide”, which refers to a victim of repeated bullying who became depressed and committed suicide (Poland, 2011, p. 92).

Bullying is commonly reported among adolescents. It is an epidemic that causes 160, 000 children a day to stay home from school (Dubreuil & Mcniff, 2010). Bullying in adolescents has been associated with general psychological distress and is considered to be a risk factor for the development of common disorders later in adulthood (Skapinakis et al., 2011). Especially important is the association between bullying and suicide. In 2010 at least fourteen students committed suicide (Dubreuil & Mcniff, 2010).

The cross sectional studies indicate a clear association between bullying and suicide, however there are methodological problems. Cross sectional studies can only provide correlation assessments, thus they are unable to provide

adequate evidence that bullying constitutes for anything more than a correlation to suicide. Many of the studies assessed suicidal behaviors using brief screening instruments and not all studies included a specific definition of bullying leaving the door open for some speculation. However, it is important to investigate the relationship between depression and suicide in correlation with bullying so that we can have a better understanding of how bullying is affecting today's youth and adolescents. The current epidemic of suicides due to bullying is quite alarming and every effort should be made to look deeper into this problem. (Skapinakis et al., 2011).

The purpose of this research paper is to investigate the affect that bullying has on youth and adolescents in relation to depression and suicide. It is hypothesized that the affects of bullying will have a significant correlation with depression and suicide. Are certain groups more at risk for depression and suicide resulting from being a victim of bullying? It is important to investigate these relationships because tragedies have been occurring rapidly. With a better understanding of the effects that bullying has on children, better prevention methods and counseling can be administered.

### Literature Review

Most of the studies conducted investigating the associations between bullying and suicide have been cross-sectional, showing that bullying in youth is associated with depression, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts. It has been found that victims of bullying exhibit more depressive symptoms, have higher levels of suicidal ideation and are more likely to attempt suicide than non victims (Klomek, Sourander, & Gould, 2011).

A survey consisting of a total of 2, 095 participants between the ages of 15 and 24 was conducted to see the rates of attempted suicide and what were the factors associated with it. Overall, 11% of females and 6% of males reported prior suicide attempts. For females, attempted suicide was independently associated with being younger (ages 15-19 compared to 20-24) and experience of school bullying. For males, attempted suicide was independently associated with experience of school bullying, being homosexual, and history of a diagnosed sexually transmitted infection (Hidaka, Operario, Takenaka, Omori, Ichikawa, & Shirasaka, 2008).

Another survey conducted, this time in Australia, showed that the young people said they had thought about committing suicide as a result of bullying, with 20 percent actually attempting it. The survey concluded that students who are bullied are three times more likely to be at risk of suffering depression.

Hinduja and Patchin (2010) conducted a survey of Internet use and experiences in 2007 of 1, 963 middle school children from one of the largest districts in the United States. The results found that youth who experienced cyber bullying were more likely to attempt suicide than those who had not experienced the same forms of peer aggression.

A self-report survey pertaining to bullying was completed by 2, 342 students in six New York State high schools from 2002 through 2004. Regression analyses were conducted to examine the association between being the victim of bullying with depression, ideation, and attempts. The results showed that 9% of the sample reported being victimized frequently, which

was related to high risks of depression, ideation, and suicide attempts compared to the students who did not report bullying. The findings indicate that victimization is a potential risk factor for adolescent depression and suicide (Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, & Gould, 2007).

Pranji and Bajraktarevi (2010) conducted a study to examine the association between involvement in school bullying and depressive symptoms and suicide ideation. 290 secondary school students aged 17 years in 2007 completed a self-reported school-based survey. Three groups were established: victims, bully victims, and uninvolved participants as control group subjects. The results showed that there was an increased prevalence of depression and suicidal ideation in adolescents who were bully victims.

Dr. Young-Shin Kim and colleagues reviewed 37 studies on bullying involving school age children spanning thirteen countries. Almost every study was found to have a connection with suicide. In particular, 5 of the studies found that bullying victims were 2 to 9 more times likely to report suicidal thoughts. This review emphasizes that bullying can potentially lead to self-harm (Kim, 2009).

Although most of the studies done on this subject matter are cross sectional, there are a few longitudinal studies of bullying and later depression or suicidal ideation that have been published, providing evidence that the association of bullying with suicide and depression is more than just a correlation. A study of Norwegian youth stated that children who at the age of eleven were being seriously bullied, later suffered from spurts of depression as young adults (Klomek et al., 2011).

The Finnish 1981 Birth Cohort Study is a large scale, population based, long term follow up study of childhood bullying with early adulthood outcomes. In this study boys and girls aged 8 were followed until they were 25 years old to investigate the outcomes of bullying. The main finding of the study was that the association between bullying behavior at the age of 8 and later suicidal behavior varied by sex. For boys, bullying behavior was not associated with later suicide attempts and deaths, after controlling both childhood conduct and depression symptoms. Frequent victimization among girls was however associated with later suicide attempts and deaths, even after controlling for childhood conduct and depression symptoms. The findings support that long term victimization differs by sex (Klomeck, Sourander, & Gould, 2010, p. 285).

With findings that suggest victimization differs by sex, one may start to think of several other questions. Do different categories of bullying have different outcomes? A study by van der Wal et al has found the associations between bullying and suicide to be stronger for indirect than for direct forms of bullying (as cited in Klomeck et al., 2010, p. 283). Hinduja and Patchin (2010) note that traditional bullying (E. g., direct physical, direct verbal, and indirect relational) and cyber bullying seem to be related to suicidal ideation in similar ways.

One may also wonder, are certain groups more at risk for depression and suicide from being a victim of bullying? A study involving lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth found that they experience high levels of bullying relating to their sexuality. A significant association between

experiencing a high level of sexuality based bullying and depressive  
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symptoms were found, along with attempted suicide. Systematic reviews and cross-sectional studies indicate that there is an increased risk of suicide attempts and/or suicidal ideation associated with bullying among LGBT youth (Hightow-Weidman, Phillips, Jones, Outlaw, Fields, & Smith, 2011, p. S39).

Increasing evidence shows that much of the self-harm behavior reported among homosexual youth is related to bullying and harassment. Such harassment can lead to feelings of depression, and has been shown through research to most likely lead to suicidal behavior in youth (Author, Suicide and anti-gay bullying).

For example, Jamey Rodemyer is a 14-year-old boy who was bullied online with gay slurs for over a year. He endured relentless torment on social networking sites. He told family and friends that he had endured the hateful comments in school and online. Jamey committed suicide (Cloherty, 2011).

As for gender both sexes are at risk for suicidal ideation, however females seem to have a slightly greater risk. According to Kim (2009), female students who were involved with bullying were at a significantly greater risk for suicidal ideation. Likewise, van der Wal stated only among girls was there a strong association between being bullied and suicidal ideation (as cited in Klomeck et al., 2010, p. 283).

## Discussion

This research paper reviewed empirical research addressing the correlation between depression and suicide in relationship to bullying. It included studies, most which were cross sectional. It was hypothesized that the

affects of bullying would have a significant correlation with depression and <https://assignbuster.com/depression-in-relationship-to-bullying-psychology-essay/>



suicide. The data from these studies indicated a clear correlation between bullying and suicide among children and adolescents, thus supporting the hypothesis. In the research of past literature, it was also found that there is a difference in reactions to victimization depending on gender. Females who were involved with bullying were at a significantly greater risk for suicidal ideation. Considering the different types of bullying, there was no significant difference found in regards to traditional bullying and cyber bullying. Both forms showed a correlation with depression and suicide. Overall, bullying is a widespread epidemic with major consequences. Depression can stem from bullying, leading to suicide.