

Bullying effects on child development



One would not expect a victim of rape to have to single-handedly identify, trace, catch, arrest, prosecute, convict and punish the person who raped her. Targets of bullying often find themselves doing all of these whilst those in positions of authority persistently abdicate and deny responsibility.” Tim Field. Research shows that bullying has long been a part of social behavior and is common practice throughout the world. It has long been perceived that childhood bullying is a rite of passage and a part of growing up regardless if you are male or female; bullying is experienced by both genders. These days childhood bullying has become a form of schoolhouse violence where kids are being tormented, abused physically and mentally, and alienated from society. REF According to some experts, childhood bullying is on the rise and has detrimental effects on children’s social and emotional development. This paper will research the cases of childhood bullying and the effects of childhood bullying from victim’s perspective, as well as the victimizer, and the possible reasons why children become bullies and the type of persons they target and victimize. More so, these facts are not shown on a chronological order as the thesis statement suggests.

Bullying is a repeated and systematic harassment and attack on others which is perpetrated by individuals or groups. According to Xin Ma, The coercive behaviors associated with bullying can be classified into two categories: physical and verbal. Physical bullying includes hitting, pushing, holding, and hostile gesturing. Verbal bullying includes threatening, humiliating, degrading, teasing, name-calling, put-downs, sarcasm, taunting, staring, sticking out the tongue, eye rolling, silent treatment, manipulating friendship, and ostracizing. Pg. 352.

School bullying is to some extent a microcosm of offending in community. Modern research in English speaking countries began with the publication of *Aggression in the schools* by O'Leary in 1978, Farrington 381. Moreover Scandinavian research on bullying continued in the late 1970's and early 1980's. According to Farrington, bullying is important in its own right, and it is surprising that more than half of children have been victimized and over half have been bullies page 382. Bullying causes immediate harm and distress to the victim and has a long term consequences for the victim's mental health. A prominent consequence was the well publicized suicides in Norwegian boys attributed to bullying, Farrington 382. In Arua where I lived most of my life, cases of suicide among teenagers have been linked to bullying in schools. Suicide cases have been disproportionately distributed among male and female students, in which there have been higher suicide cases among high school girls than boys. This observation showed that girls were more susceptible to bullying in schools. The Girls could not endure the high social pressure bullies create for them in school and they become weak and are easily compelled to commit suicide. More so suicide cases were common among pregnant teenage girls. Pregnant teenage girls are both bullied by their peers and pressured by their parents to abort the baby or leave home because of the unwanted pregnancy. This creates a huge stress in the girls' life as such she may feel that she is defeated, and see's no value in her live. Consequently, she ends up committing suicide directly or engages in non medical abortions whereby she dies in the process.

Bullying has negative consequences for the bully since it may be reinforced by enjoyment and status hence the bully becomes more likely to engage in

other aggressive behavior. In the school I attended in Uganda, students who bully were referred to as “ring leaders”. They were always present in situations of disagreement and violence; they were more active to lead student ‘gang’ groups that always caused disorder in the school. They were more respected among their peers because of their ‘authoritative voice’, and their love for violence. In order for the ring leaders to uphold the respect, they see themselves compelled to engage in even more riskier acts in the neighborhood for instance getting into fights in night clubs, throwing stones at police cars, roofs, and drugs and sometimes stealing from the neighborhood. All these acts hinder their development into responsible citizens because they sometimes end up locked behind bars and drop out of school.

Furthermore, Farrington made it crystal clear that bullying is related to crime, criminal violence, and other types of antisocial behavior, 383. Anti social behaviors has a wide legal definition. To paraphrase the United Kingdom Crime and Disorder Act 1998, it is behavior which causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more people who are not in the same household as the perpetrator. Among the forms it can take are: abusive and intimidating language, too often directed at minorities and weaker ones. Abusive and intimidating do not establish proper communication and mutual understanding. This often creates misunderstanding which leads to violence. Effective communication acts as a tool to iron out difference between individuals, bullies and victims.

Moreover bullying arises in environments that provide opportunities between bullies and victims especially schools, learning institutions and work places.

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Dan Olweus a Norwegian researcher on bullying shows in his work that bullying tends to be more aggressive over many settings for long. Possible reason for this trend emanates from the fact that, in situations where bullying exists, there is lack of proper communication between the bully and the victim. Effective communication most especially dialogue is the best tool that settle differences between contending or disagreeing individuals.

More so ' bullies are drawn disproportionately from lower socioeconomic status families with poor child rearing techniques, tend to be impulsive and unsuccessful in school', Farrington. However, bullies are not necessarily from lower socio economic status family. In my personal experience, kids from high status family tend to be more bully than economically disadvantaged kids, even though there were well off kids who do not bully. In the school I attended in Uganda, nearly all the bullies were from well to do families not poor families. Likewise victims tend to be unpopular and rejected by their peers, tend to have low school attainment, low self esteem, and poor in social skill. Farrington. I consent to this observation, in my school there were few kids whom ' we' picked on them, they were always shy and unable to sustain a conversation with other students. This made them the main target of bullying by nearly everyone in my school, however nothing administratively was done to curve this bad menace, bullying.

Bullying builds up from family, individual and school related factors. Child rearing styles and lack of attention and warmth towards the child coupled with poor supervision will model a child to an aggressive bully. A child's temperament, tendencies to develop certain personality styles and interpersonal behavior will model him or her into a bully. Active and

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impulsive boys may like bully their age peers. Supervision and the climate at school play a great role in promoting bullying. A school should have a social climate where there is warmth and acceptance for everyone.

Furthermore “ There is evidence that social isolation and victimization tend to persist from childhood to adulthood, and that victimized people tend to have children who are victimized, Farrington 383. In most societies in Uganda, people relate kids to their parents. Children of People of high social status in the neighbor were well treated and respected by their peers. Mean while children of people who are socially isolated were treated different and were susceptible to victimization in school. According to an axiom that is metaphorically coated in my dialect, “ a lion gives birth to a lion” meaning that you inherit whatever traits from your father. If a person was victimized his children may be likely victimized too. Therefore it may be a trait or characteristic that is transferred in the genes.

Bullying has largely been discussed as though it were an isolated behavior. It is not. Bullying is only one element of aggression, just as aggression is only one element of a larger syndrome of antisocial behavior. In the psychiatric literature, this larger syndrome is usually termed “ disruptive behavior disorders,” comprising conduct disorder, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder, and oppositional defiant disorder, and is distinguished from the anxiety disorders (American Psychiatric Association 1987). A similar distinction is drawn in British child and adolescent psychiatry (e. g., Graham and Rutter . 1985).(Farrington).

Victimization is probably one element of a larger syndrome of anxiety disorders or internalizing problems. However, as Perry et al. (1988, p. 807) pointed out, “ despite the fact that all acts of interpersonal aggression involve two participants, a bully and a victim, almost all re-search devoted to understanding aggressive behavior has focused on the aggressor.” (Farrington). Therefore we should not forget the fact that anxiety and disorders may make one susceptible to bullying and victimization, because these are characteristics that bullies look for in their subjects.

In whatever case, bullying has a huge impact on the health of the victim. As stated earlier, a great negative effect is on the mental development of the victim. Whether it is physical bullying or mental bullying, the victim will develop, emotional numbness or inability to feel love, flash backs, sleeplessness, impaired memory, inability to concentrate, anxiety, depression among many others put forth by scholars. “ Bullies thrive wherever authority is weak” Tim field. Tanya in her essay pointed out that ‘ Researchers have developed a personality framework to understand how bullying occurs. Accordingly, students target peers who have difficulty coping with aggressive overtures. These targeted children may feel highly anxious and afraid, and cry easily. Mahady Wilton, Craig, and Pepler (2000) found that targeted children may lack coping and problem-solving strategies that may increase the likelihood of another attack and lead to long-term negative developmental outcomes. Implications of these findings suggest that bully prevention strategies should include skills training for victimized children’. 702

To determine incidences of bullying in children, one has to look at actions on case to case basis. Certain actions such as running away from peers, falling down and hurting himself may not count as bullying but children report them as bullying, as the research by In their research, Tanya and Bonnie help us understand how mix up acts of bullying with acts that are non bullying. Primarily bullying is unacceptable practice whatsoever. Although school administrators may consider the practice as a rite of passage that each student has to go through, the consequences of bullying over weighs its benefits. In fact there are no rational benefits that bullying give to our kids, instead our kids become tormented, abused and alienated from society leaving them psychologically affected. This greatly reduces the development of the child. Therefore serious steps need to be taken to curve this practice from happening as well as helping the victims of bullying.