

Research Paper

An Investigation of the Role of Parenting styles and Siblings in School Bullying Behaviors

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ABSTRACT

The acts of Bullying in schools have always been a matter of concern with high prevalence reported around the world. Whether direct or indirect, bullying has long term negative impacts on academic, social, and emotional functioning on the bully, victim, and the bystanders. In some cases, aggressive behavior in the form of bullying in childhood often persists into adulthood and the more conduct problems and less favorable views of school often lead to academic disengagement in bullies. The current study investigates bullying behavior and the role of parenting style and presence of sibling in children of the age group 6-12 years. The Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire and The Olweus Bully Questionnaire were used in data collection. Results of the study revealed that there is a statistically significant difference in the level of bullying behavior among the three types of parenting styles with the bullying score of children with authoritarian parenting style higher than authoritative and permissive parenting style. Bullying behavior was higher for children having siblings in their family. The implication of the study is for all stakeholders in the education system towards increasing attention in implementing evidence-based prevention as well as intervention programs to target bullying behavior in schools that involves parenting skills training as part of Multi-tiered Systems of Support framework which will reduce the future incidence of such behaviors in children.

Keywords: Parenting Styles, Bullying, Siblings, Parenting Skills Training

The acts of Bullying in schools have always been a matter of concern with high prevalence reported around the world (UNESCO, 2017). In fact, Indian schools have reported an alarming prevalence of bullying involvement as around 53 % with prevalence of bullies and victims as 34% and 30-60% respectively (Kshirsagar, Agarwal & Bavdekar, 2007). Bullying is often carried out with an intent to harm the targeted person (Olweus, 1993) physically, verbally, or psychologically. Whether direct or indirect, bullying has long term negative impacts on academic, social, and emotional functioning on the bully, victim and the bystanders (Kibriya, Xu & Zhang, 2015). Refusal to go to school, low self-esteem, lacking confidence and low academic achievement are some of the most common responses to bullying in victims, especially if it is frequent and severe. They are more likely to have anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation and are lonely and consider themselves as

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Received: June 14, 2023; Revision Received: July 20, 2023; Accepted: July 23, 2023

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less competent (Bhuyan & Manjula, 2017). Research also shows that most victims of bullying do not report these incidents to parents which makes an important protective factor unavailable for them (Kshirsagar, Agarwal & Bavdekar, 2007). In some cases, the aggressive behavior in the form of bullying in childhood often persists into adulthood and the more conduct problems and less favorable views of school often lead to academic disengagement in bullies (Huddleston, Varjas, Meyers & Cadenhead, 2011). The risk of drug involvement and poor school adjustment is also higher among people who bully (Nansel et al., 2001).

Bullying in school could be an indicator of the interactions of the child in a family (Rigby, 1994). Parents influence how children behave with their peers by teaching prosocial ways of interaction and provide positive reinforcement for socially adaptive behaviors (Rajendran, Kruszewski & Halperin, 2016). Parents of bullies have been reported to lack warmth and acceptance using harsh discipline strategies. Maternal aggression, power assertive disciplining strategies and lack of warmth may be associated with children's bullying behaviors (Olweus, 1980). The relationships between siblings are also likely to impact school bullying through shared personal and environmental characteristics (Wolke & Skew, 2012). Similarly, studies have found that greater autonomy provided by parents was associated with lower levels of antisocial behavior among both boys and girls (Barber & Olsen, 1997).

The current study aims to understand the relationship between parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative and permissive) and bullying behavior and the effect of presence of siblings in the family on bullying behavior among children of late childhood. The rationale behind the study is that despite the awareness that siblings play a major role in family relationships and in individuals' adjustment, there has been limited research on the impact siblings have on bullying behaviors of children in schools. The current study will also throw light at the importance of prevention as well as interventions to target bullying behavior in schools that involves parenting skills training as part of Multi-tiered Systems of Support framework which will reduce the future incidence of such behaviors in children and in the society. Studies show that both students and teachers benefit from school-based bullying prevention programs involving parents as stakeholders and they effectively reduce bullying by 20 to 23 % and victimization by 17 to 20 % (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

Objective

The study investigates bullying behavior and the role of parenting style and presence of sibling in children of the age group six to twelve years.

Hypotheses

- There will be statistically significant difference in the level of bullying behavior among the three types of parenting styles.
- There will be statistically significant difference in the level of bullying behavior between children with and without siblings in their family.

Sample

The sample of this study is collected through purposive sampling which is 100 students of the age group six to twelve and their parent in Bangalore and Ernakulam. Informed consent form was collected from the parents of the participants and assent form from the children.

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- *Inclusion criteria.* Children belonging to age group (6 to 12 years) studying in schools in Bangalore and Ernakulam and the primary caregiver or parent.
- *Exclusion criteria.* Presence of any mental health issues in any of the participants.

Instrument

- **The PSDQ (Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire)** is a questionnaire which measures 3 types of parenting styles (according to Baumrind) - authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. It consists of 58 items that measure the three parenting styles and consists of different dimensions under each parenting style. Each item is evaluated with the five points Likert scale. The validity of the PSDQ cross culturally is 0.97 and has good reliability and is a useful tool to measure parenting styles (Robinson, Roper, Mandleco & Hart, 2001).
- **The Olweus Bully Questionnaire (OBQ)** is one of the most widely used instruments to measure the prevalence of bullying worldwide. This questionnaire consists of 42 items which provides students with a clear definition of bullying and was developed in 1983. It has adequate psychometric properties to assess the prevalence of victimization and aggression and various forms of bullying worldwide (Smith et.al, 2016).

Procedure

For the purpose of this research, 100 samples were chosen (children aged 6 to 12 years) and their primary caregiver/ parent from Bangalore and Ernakulam. Two questionnaires were administered, the first, one being Parenting Styles and Dimension Questionnaire for the parent to assess their parenting style and the second one being Olweus Bully Questionnaire to measure bullying behaviors in children. Prior to accessing the questionnaires subjects were presented an informed consent form and assent form. All individuals who granted consent were directed to a brief demographics survey and subsequently to the questionnaires. The time spent responding to the survey was approximately 30 minutes. The data responses were analyzed using SPSS.

Variables

The dependent variable in this research is the student's bullying scores on the Olweus Bully Questionnaire and the independent variable is Parenting styles (Authoritarian, authoritative and permissive) based on the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire and the presence of siblings in the family.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicates that there is a Statistically significant difference in the level of aggression among the three types of parenting styles ($F(2) = 6.21, p < 0.05$). The mean bullying score of children with authoritarian parenting style (87.12 ± 18.3) higher than the mean bullying score of children with permissive parenting style (75.15 ± 16.5) and mean bullying score of children with authoritative parenting style (56.56 ± 10.7). Table 1 displays the results of the ANOVA test.

Table No.1 Bullying in different types of parenting styles

	Mean \pm SD			F-value (p-value)
Parenting style	Authoritarian	Authoritative	Permissive	Between group
	87.12 ± 18.3	56.56 ± 10.7	75.15 ± 16.5	5.325 (<.05)

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Independent sample T test was performed to test the hypothesis that presence of siblings are significantly related to bullying. The mean bullying score for the adolescents with siblings (83.42 ± 16.1) was higher than mean bullying score for only child (70.44 ± 12.5), a statistically significant difference of -13.66 (95%CI, $(t(100) = -5.32, p < .05)$). Table 2 displays the results of the T Test.

Table No. 2 Independent sample T test of Bullying behavior between only child and children with siblings

Bullying	Mean + SD		t	p- value
	Only Child	With Siblings		
	83.42 + 16.1	70.44 + 12.5	-5.21	< .05

Authoritarian parenting emphasizes control and obedience of children and punishment if the child exhibits behaviors that are inconsistent with the parent's wishes, being distant and less responsive to the child which is often modelled by the children in their relationship with others. The parent of the bullies as well as the bully has a tendency to hold full control over others (Tajuddin, Utami & Arafat, 2017). Children who often feel depressed because of such treatments from their parents, but do not have the ability to solve them well, tend to vent problems in the form of mischief to their friends, including in the form of bullying. Bullying offenders usually come from families with low relationships, little warmth, presence of absent father, need high power, family dysfunction, aggressive behavior and authoritarian parents (Santrock, 2003). If since childhood the individual has been introduced to violence either verbally or physically, then the individual will experience a learning process that will also imitate what their parents did to him. This certainly makes the child who is raised from a parent with such a character to have a tendency to be a bully (Tajuddin, Utami & Arafat, 2017). The result of these interactions is an increased likelihood of developing emotional dysregulation. Children who experience bullying from their parents are more likely to have problems processing and expressing anger than children who do not experience bullying from their parents (Tajuddin, Utami & Arafat, 2017).

Permissive parenting is also linked to bullying behavior with children raised with too much freedom and a lack of boundaries as more likely to bully or be bullied (Rodriguez, 2016). A protective factor against being bullied or becoming a bully is having parents who are facilitative, warm and responsive to their children and providing appropriate levels of autonomy.

Consistent with previous studies, results of the current study also show that aggression in children is highly influenced by the siblings and leads to higher level of aggression and bullying behaviors (Natsuaki, Ge, Reiss, & Neiderhiser, 2009). Studies show that children who are involved in sibling bullying are more likely to be involved in bullying outside the home as the bully, an enabler, or the victim of bullying (Rajendran, Kruszewski & Halperin, 2016). In fact, one study found that being bullied by a sibling was just as damaging as bullying by peers (Tucker, Finkelhor, Turner & Shattuck, 2013) Parents play a role in this like allowing children to continuously fight without intervening that is harmful to both kids. This often creates an impression that it is okay to engage in violence to get what they want or harm others.

CONCLUSION

The current study reveals many promising results including the finding that authoritarian and permissive parenting styles are closely linked to bullying behaviors in children along

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with the presence of siblings. The findings in the study suggest the need for future theory-based research to further analyze the relationships between bullying, victimization, bystander effect, parenting styles and role of siblings. The implication of the study is for all stakeholders in the education system towards increasing attention in implementing evidence-based prevention as well as intervention programs to target bullying behavior in schools that involves parenting skills training as part of Multi-tiered Systems of Support framework which will reduce the future incidence of such behaviors in children. Intervention Programs in schools that involve parent collaboration and other stakeholders to prevent and deal with bullying like Steps to Respect, Olweus Bullying Prevention program, Kiva, Coping Power, Incredible years etc. to be implemented in India, keeping in mind the alarming increase in bullying behaviors and its impact on overall physical, mental and social health of students.

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Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Reje, A.M. & Mohan, A. (2023). An Investigation of the Role of Parenting styles and Siblings in School Bullying Behaviors. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(3), 1008-1013. DIP:18.01.095.20231103, DOI:10.25215/1103.095