The International Journal of Indian Psychology
ISSN 2348-5396 (Online) | ISSN: 2349-3429 (Print)
Volume 13, Issue 3, July- September, 2025
DIP: 18.01.183.20251303, DOI: 10.25215/1303.183
https://www.ijip.in

Research Paper

The Impact of School Bullying and Anti-Bullying Programs on Student Behaviour

Satya Krishna Bhargava Y[1]*, Kavya Vijayan[2]

ABSTRACT

School bullying remains a significant threat to adolescent well-being, academic achievement, and social development. Despite the widespread implementation of anti-bullying policies in schools, bullying continues to manifest in physical, verbal, relational, and cyber forms. This study explores the impact of school bullying and the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs on student behaviour using a mixed-methods approach. Twenty secondary school students participated through surveys and semi-structured interviews. Results reveal that 80% of participants experienced at least one form of bullying in the past year. While schools have implemented preventive programs, many students remain unaware of them or perceive them as ineffective. Thematic insights show that students experience emotional trauma, distrust in school support systems, and advocate for empathy-based interventions. These findings call for culturally responsive, whole-school approaches that include peer engagement, teacher training, and emotional learning integration.

Keywords: *School Bullying, Adolescent Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Programs, School Climate, Mixed Methods*

School bullying is a global phenomenon affecting the physical and psychological well-being of students. In India, rising reports of bullying—especially among adolescents—highlight the urgency for effective intervention. Bullying is defined as repeated aggressive behaviour involving a power imbalance, manifesting as physical, verbal, relational, or digital aggression. While anti-bullying programs are present in many educational institutions, their impact remains questionable, with limited student involvement in design and implementation. This study explores the behavioural and psychological outcomes of bullying and evaluates how current school programs address student needs.

Theoretical Framework

Three theories inform this research:

1. **General Strain Theory** (Agnew, 2001): Suggests that exposure to stressors like bullying leads to negative emotions and maladaptive behaviours.
2. **Social Learning Theory** (Bandura, 1977): Explains how students may mimic aggressive behaviours observed in their environment.

[1]Jain University Deemed to Be
[2]Jain University Deemed to Be
*Corresponding Author

Received: May 15, 2025; Revision Received: August 12, 2025; Accepted: August 16, 2025

© 2025, Bhargava, Y.S.K. & Vijayan, K.; licensee IJIP. This is an Open Access Research distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any Medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

3. **Ecological Systems Theory** (Bronfenbrenner, 1979): Views students within interconnected systems—family, peers, school, and society—that collectively shape responses to bullying.
4. These frameworks provide a layered understanding of how bullying develops and how schools can intervene meaningfully.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Global data indicate that between 20% to 30% of students experience bullying, with variations based on region, gender, and school type. Boys often report more physical aggression, while girls report relational and cyber forms. Psychological outcomes include anxiety, depression, and school avoidance. Academically, bullied students show reduced concentration, absenteeism, and diminished performance.

Studies show that many anti-bullying programs lack cultural adaptation, student voice, or integration into daily school life. Research points toward social-emotional learning (SEL), whole-school approaches, and student-led initiatives as more promising models. However, these remain inconsistently applied in Indian contexts.

METHOD

Research Design

A mixed-methods design was adopted to gain both breadth and depth. Quantitative data were gathered through structured questionnaires, while qualitative data emerged from semi-structured interviews.

Participants

Twenty secondary school students (13–16 years old) from an urban Indian school were selected using purposive sampling. Equal gender representation was maintained.

Data Collection Tools

- **Survey**: Assessed bullying type, frequency, location, behavioural effects, and awareness of school responses.
- **Interview**: Focused on lived experiences, emotional impact, and suggestions for intervention.

Ethical Considerations

Participants provided informed consent (and parental consent for minors). Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. Emotional support was available for distressed participants.

RESULTS

Quantitative Findings

- **Prevalence**: 80% reported being bullied in the past year.
- **Gender Patterns**: Physical bullying was more common among boys; cyber and relational bullying among girls.
- **Program Awareness**: Only 40% were aware of anti-bullying programs; even fewer had participated.
- **Behavioural Impact**: Increased absenteeism, anxiety, anger, and avoidance behaviours.

Qualitative Findings

Five main themes emerged:

1. **Emotional Trauma**: Persistent fear, anxiety, and low self-worth.
2. **Avoidance Behaviour**: Students avoided areas or individuals associated with bullying.
3. **Distrust in Reporting Systems**: Many reported lacks of follow-up or dismissive attitudes from staff.
4. **Peer Dynamics**: Bystanders often remained silent out of fear or social pressure.
5. **Student-Driven Change**: Students suggested empathy training, confidential reporting, and peer mediation.

DISCUSSION

The results validate the theoretical frameworks. Students subjected to strain (bullying) responded with both internalizing (withdrawal) and externalizing (aggression) behaviours. Observational learning explained the perpetuation of aggression in peer groups. Ecological analysis highlighted the gap between program intention and practical implementation.

Notably, despite the presence of anti-bullying programs, students' experiences indicate they are not integrated into the school's relational culture. Emotional safety remains compromised. These findings echo global literature while contributing a uniquely Indian perspective marked by cultural silence, stigma, and hierarchical power dynamics.

Recommendations

- **Curriculum Integration**: Embed SEL and anti-bullying education across subjects.
- **Teacher Training**: Equip staff with tools for empathetic conflict resolution and trauma sensitivity.
- **Student Engagement**: Create anonymous reporting systems, peer mentoring, and leadership roles.
- **Cultural Adaptation**: Design interventions that acknowledge caste, gender, and socio-economic realities.
- **Monitoring**: Establish feedback loops and regular program evaluations involving students.

Limitations

This study involved a small, non-random sample from one school, limiting generalizability. Self-reported data may include biases. Future research should use longitudinal, multi-site approaches with triangulation from teachers and parents.

CONCLUSION

Bullying continues to harm students emotionally, socially, and academically. Although school programs exist, many fail to deliver meaningful support. This research urges a systemic shift toward student-centered, empathetic practices rooted in lived experience and supported by all stakeholders. Lasting change requires more than rules—it demands relationship-based, culturally aware action.

REFERENCES

Agnew, R. (2001). Building on the foundation of general strain theory: Specifying the types of strain most likely to lead to crime and delinquency. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 38*(4), 319–361.

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social Learning Theory*. Prentice Hall.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Harvard University Press.

Smith, P. K., & Brain, P. (2000). Bullying in schools: Lessons from two decades of research. *Aggressive Behavior, 26*(1), 1–9.

Acknowledgment

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: Bhargava, Y.S.K. & Vijayan, K. (2025). The Impact of School Bullying and Anti-Bullying Programs on Student Behaviour. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, *13*(3)*,* 2009-2012. DIP:18.01.183.20251303, DOI:10.25215/1303.183