

Types of Bullying

Bullying can involve direct physical and verbal aggression, or it can involve more subtle forms of indirect aggression, such as spreading rumors. Boys tend to bully others physically and verbally, whereas girls tend to bully others using more social forms, but both boys and girls can use all forms of bullying.¹ A relatively new form of aggression called electronic bullying (or cyberbullying) incorporates the use of technology such as text messaging, instant messaging, social networking websites, and webpages. Electronic bullying has emerged as a new form of bullying which often goes unnoticed by parents and other concerned adults.

Key Research Findings

- Physical bullying includes behaviors such as hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, beating up, stealing, and damaging property.²
- Verbal bullying includes behaviors such as name-calling, mocking, hurtful teasing, humiliating or threatening someone, racist comments, or sexual harassment.³
- Name calling is the most frequent type of verbal bullying: negative comments are often made about appearance, intellectual capacity, sexuality and personality, as well as the frequent use of expletives.⁴
- Social* bullying includes behaviors such as eye rolling, turning away from someone, excluding others from the group, gossiping or spreading rumors, setting others up to look foolish, and damaging friendships.⁵
- Adults often perceive social aggression as normal behavior with few hurtful consequences, which is reflected in their reluctance to respond.⁶
- The adage, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me," is not only inaccurate, but also harmful because it minimizes the concerns of socially and verbally victimized children.⁷
- Electronic bullying includes the use of email, cell phones, text messages, and internet sites to threaten, harass, embarrass, socially exclude, or damage reputations and friendships.⁸
- Girls appear to be at a greater risk of electronic bullying than boys.⁹
- The anonymity provided by the Internet and other electronic media allows youth who may not otherwise exhibit aggression to feel less constrained by social norms. The lack of emotional feedback and repercussions associated with electronic forms of bullying can lead to more aggressive behavior.¹⁰
- Racial bullying includes behaviors such as: treating people disrespectfully because of their racial or ethnic background, saying bad things about a cultural background, calling someone racist names, or telling racist jokes.^{11,12}
- Religious bullying comprises treating people disrespectfully because of their religious background or beliefs, saying bad things about a religious background or belief, name calling or telling jokes based on others' religious beliefs and practices.¹³

* For the purposes of this paper, we have chosen the term "social" instead of "relational" bullying in order to be more inclusive of non-verbal bullying behaviors.

- Sexual bullying includes behaviors such as leaving someone out or treating him/her disrespectfully because of their gender, making sexist comments or jokes, unwanted touching, pinching or grabbing someone in a sexual way, making crude comments about someone's sexual behavior, spreading a sexual rumor about someone, or calling someone gay, a fag, a dyke, or making inferences about their sexual orientation.^{14,15}
- Disability bullying includes behaviors such as: leaving someone out or treating them disrespectfully because of a disability, making someone feel uncomfortable because of a disability, or making comments or jokes to hurt someone with a disability.¹⁶
- Children who are victimized often report being victimized by many forms of bullying, not just one particular type. Thus, involvement in any form of bullying is a risk factor for potentially more serious problems associated with bullying.

Key Themes

- Peer bullying and victimization can take many forms, all of which are harmful and represent the abuse of power.
- Girls tend to perpetrate social forms of bullying more often than boys, while boys tend to perpetrate physical forms of bullying, but boys and girls can engage in all forms of bullying.

Implications

Education

- In-school programming should educate all students and teachers about the different forms of bullying and the associated consequences.
- Adults need to be made aware of the different forms of bullying and associated consequences, and should be taught strategies for responding to and validating the experiences of children who have been victimized by any type of bullying.

Assessment

- Assessments of bullying should measure all forms of bullying and victimization.

Prevention and Intervention

- If a child is bullying others or being victimized by one form of bullying, adults should investigate whether any other types of bullying may also be taking place.
- Bullying prevention and intervention programs should focus on all types of bullying, and should take gender and age into consideration when addressing each type of bullying.

Policy

- School programs and policies that address bullying must take into consideration the various types of bullying, the diverse factors associated

with a child bullying others or being victimized, and implications that result from experiencing victimization.

¹ Scheithauer, H., Hayer, T., Petermann, F., & Jugert, G. (2006). Physical, verbal, and relational forms of bullying among German students: Age trends, gender differences, and correlates. *Aggressive Behavior, 32*, 261-275.

² <http://prevnet.ca/Bullying/tabid/94/Default.aspx>

³ See note 2 above.

⁴ Peterson, J. S., & Ray, K. E. (2006). Bullying and the gifted: Victims, perpetrators, prevalence, and effects. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 50*, 148-168.

⁵ See note 2 above.

⁶ Bauman, S., & Del Rio, A. (2006). Preservice teachers' responses to bullying scenarios: Comparing physical, verbal, and relational bullying. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*, 219-231.

⁷ See note 6 above.

⁸ See note 2 above.

⁹ Chisholm, J. F. (2006). Cyberspace violence against girls and adolescent females. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 1087*, 74-89.

¹⁰ Ybarra, M. L. Mitchell, K. J. (2004b). Youth engaging in online harassment: associations with caregiver-child relationships, Internet use, and personal characteristics. *Journal of Adolescence, 27*, 319-36.

¹¹ See note 2 above.

¹² Whitted, K. S., & Dupper, D. R. (2005). Best practices for preventing or reducing bullying in schools. *Children and Schools, 27*, 167-174.

¹³ See note 2 above.

¹⁴ See note 2 above.

¹⁵ See note 12 above.

¹⁶ See note 2 above.