

Bullying in Schools: Patterns, Reactions, and Intervention Strategies among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to find out how common, different kinds, and how teens and young adults (12–20 years old) feel about bullying at school. 357 teenagers (N = 357) took part in the study. There were 215 females and 142 males among them. The participants were chosen from North Macedonian schools in Skopje. The participants' ages were distributed as follows: Ten years (n = 30), eleven years (n = 45), twelve years (n = 77), thirteen years (n = 92), fourteen years (n = 83), and fifteen years (n = 11). A questionnaire was used to get information from 351 subjects about their experiences with being bullied, bullying others, and observing bullying. The poll had both multiple-choice and open-ended questions about things like how often and for how long bullying happens, the different types of bullying, emotional responses, ways of coping, practices for getting help, and how people feel about interventions.

As a result, bullying practices were found to be very common. Most of teenagers who participated had been victims, perpetrators, or observers of bullying. The participants talked about different kinds of bullying, such as physical violence, comments, being left out of social groups, and cyberbullying.

From the total number 50.1% of them have been bullied 39.5% or 177 of them were at least once bullied. Among the common forms of bullying 64 or 36% of them have been exposed in insulting, gossip with 33.7% or 60 of them, physical impact is the following form of bullying among 13.5% or 24 of them and threats in 12.9% or 23 participants. Other distributions are in smaller percentages 9.6% are other forms of bullying, following by exclusion from school groups with 9%, insults via mobile 6.7%, cyberbullying with 2.2% or 4 participants.

While witnesses reacted in a variety of ways, ranging from passive observation to active involvement, victims often described negative emotions such as sadness, fear, and a sense of helplessness.

Some of the most important things that led to bullying were found to be personal traits, family relationships, the school setting, and social effects. Notably, treatments like activities that raise knowledge about bullying and help from school psychologists were seen as effective ways to reduce bullying incidents. These results make it clear how important it is to have complete anti-bullying programs that deal with the many aspects of bullying and offer specialized help to victims, bullies, and onlookers.

Keywords: Bullying, Victimization, Witnessing, Emotional Responses, Intervention Strategies, Anti-Bullying Initiatives

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is using one's strength or status to intimidate, harm, or humiliate someone of lower strength or status. It may be physical, verbal, or social. Physical bullying includes physical harm or the fear of violence. Verbal bullying is defined as taunting or disparaging someone. Social bullying is the use of peer rejection or exclusion to humiliate or isolate the victim. Approximately 30% of 6th-10th grade kids face moderate-to-frequent bullying, either as a bully, target, or both. Approximately 1.7 million youngsters in this age range harass their peers. Boys are more prone to engage in bullying and aggressive conduct than girls. Girls are more likely to engage in verbal bullying than physical violence. Every day, around 160,000 kids avoid school due to fear of

being attacked or intimidated by peers, and some may even quit out. Stress from "victimization" might disrupt students' involvement and learning in school. Children who bully others are more likely to engage in aggressive conduct, including fighting and carrying a weapon. (Robert Joseph Boland., 2022)

Bullying is now defined as more than just a bigger, stronger youngster picking on a smaller, weaker victim, and it usually contains four crucial components. The first component of the term now includes severe bodily, emotional, or psychic injury to the victim. The second is the victim's helplessness to stop the bully on their own. The third kind is a power imbalance, in which the bully has greater emotional, physical, or social control over the victim. The last category includes the bully's repeated activities that last for a lengthy period of time. Bullying can occur in almost any interpersonal environment. While it affects both young people and adults, the topic is typically addressed in the context of school-aged children and adolescents. (Gale, 2019)

Bullying is very common and affects about one-third of all children in the world. Bullying can happen anywhere, from school to the internet. Bullying is a form of aggression that can have long-lasting negative health and psychological effects on everyone involved, even though it is sometimes seen as a normal part of growth as a child. Not only does bullying hurt the victim in ways that can be physical, mental, social, or educational, but it can also have very bad effects on the bullies, the victims, and people who watch. (Joshua Kallman., 2021)

Bullying in kids is a big public health issue because it makes kids and teens more likely to have bad health, social, and school results. All people involved in bullying feel these effects, including bullies, victims, and people who have been bullied. These effects are now known to last well into adulthood. Cyberbullying is a relatively new form of bullying. The other types are direct physical bullying, direct vocal bullying, and indirect bullying. Bullying is more likely to happen to kids who are seen as "different" in some way. Bullying and other forms of school violence are pervasive: one in three students worldwide experience bullying at school each month. The increasing use of digital gadgets has intensified cyberbullying. At least 10% of students in the 8–10 age range reported experiencing cyberbullying in 2019, and that percentage rose to 20% in the 12–14 age range. The safety, emotional, and physical well-being of students, as well as their academic performance, can all be adversely affected by school violence. (UNESCO, 2019)

The most common way that kids are bullied is because of how they look. One in three children around the world have been bullied in the last 30 days, but the number of cases and types of bullying vary a lot from region to area. The effects of bullying as a kid can be broken down into three main groups: effects on schooling, effects on health, and effects on all aspects of life as an adult. There are many dose–response links between how often and how badly someone is bullied and how bad the health effects are that they describe. The vast majority of people who are bullied online are also bullied in real life, which means that cyberbullying doesn't really add any new victims. Overall, bad mental health results from childhood bullying are worst for those who were bullied and those who were bullied. Stopping bullying is an important part of reaching the Sustainable Development Goals, and whole-school group learning programs have the most proof that they work. There aren't any clear management or referral routes for health workers working with childhood bullying in either primary or secondary care. However, there are local and online expert services that can help. (Armitage, 2021)

Bullying someone physically doesn't just mean hitting, kicking, or pushing them (or even just threatening to do those things). Taking, hiding, or damaging your things is also part of it, as well as hazing, bullying, making you feel bad, or forcing you to do things you don't want to do. When someone orally abuses you, they call you names, tease, taunt, insult, or do something else hurtful. Bullying in a relationship means not talking to you, keeping you out of activities or groups, spreading lies or stories about you, or putting you in situations that are awkward or embarrassing. Cyberbullying is different from regular bullying because it doesn't happen in person and can be seen by many people at once. Cyberbullying can happen anywhere and at any time. People can cyberbully you by sending mean or dangerous messages through email, text, social media, or instant messaging (IM), as well as by flirting, posting revenge porn, or stealing your online identity to hurt and embarrass you. There is a lot more bullying at work than you might think. Bullying isn't just a problem for kids and teens; it can happen at work too, whether you're in an office, on the factory floor, or even from home.

Bullying at work can make any job more difficult and make you feel angry, ashamed, and open to being hurt. (Lawrence Robinson., 2023)

Bullying has been studied for more than forty years. At that time, it was described as "aggressive, intentional acts done by a group or an individual repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend himself or herself." Three things must be present for violent behavior to be considered bullying: (1) it must happen more than once, (2) it must be done on purpose, and (3) there must be an imbalance of power. Because of these traits, bullying is usually thought of as repeated power abuse by peers. Everyone in the world agrees that it is a difficult and important issue. (Ersilia Menesini., 2017)

Bullying and hazing are common problems in schools, workplaces, and other places, and they hurt people's mental and emotional health. About 28% of school-age kids say they have been bullied, and 30% say they have bullied others. 10% to 14% of kids are bullied for a long time. Boys are more likely to bully others physically or verbally, while girls are more likely to bully others in their relationships. Over 40% of workers are bullied at work, and hazing is common in clubs and groups. Bullying comes from a desire for power and control, which is often caused by a lack of understanding and the inability to handle anger. Victims have physical, mental, and behavioral symptoms that need early intervention methods to help and stop the abuse. It is important to know how common and harmful bullying and hazing are in order to make places better and improve people's health. (Dryden-Edwards, 2008)

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Purpose

The aim of this study was to look at trends, responses, and ways to prevent bullying among teens in schools. In particular, the study looked into how common bullying is, how teens behave when they see bullying happen, and what kinds of problems could be solved by intervening in school situations to stop bullying.

Participants

In all, 357 teenagers (N = 357) took part in the study. There were 215 females and 142 males among them as shown in Table 1 (tab. 1).

Demographic data

Table 1. Gender Frequency

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	215	60.2	60.2	60.2
Male	142	39.8	39.8	100.0
Total	357	100.0	100.0	

The participants were chosen from North Macedonian schools in Skopje. The participants' ages were distributed as follows: Ten years (n = 30), eleven years (n = 45), twelve years (n = 77), thirteen years (n = 92), fourteen years (n = 83), and fifteen years (n = 11) Table 2.

Table 2. Age Frequency

	Frequency	Percent
Age 9	19	5.3
10	30	8.4
11	45	12.6
12	77	21.6

	13	92	25.8
	14	83	23.2
	15	11	12.6
	Total	357	357

Data Collection

Data were collected using an online survey questionnaire developed specifically for this study. The questionnaire consisted of 18 statements related to bullying behaviors and reactions. The survey was administered to participants in schools in Skopje, North Macedonia, and responses were collected electronically.

Data Analysis

After data collection was finished, the information obtained from the online survey was combined and formatted so that statistical analysis could be performed. Software called SPSS was used to do statistical analysis. To compile the participant demographics and the frequency of bullying behaviors, descriptive statistics were generated. T-tests were used for hypothesis testing in order to compare means and evaluate the significance of group differences.

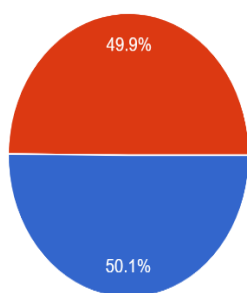
Research questions

As stated above our main aim of the research was to explore and study the common forms and the frequency of bullying as common phenomena among teenagers. Other important objective of the research was to see and explore the emotional reactions of the victims of bullying. Witnessing bullying also was part of our study interest that's for we asked them for their thoughts, feelings and their reactions as well about witnessing bullying. So accordingly, our study question is as in follow:

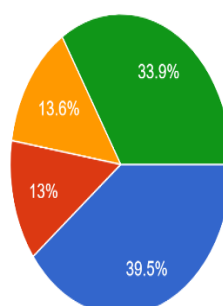
- The level and the frequency of the bullying among teenagers between 10-15 years old
- What are the common forms of bullying among teenagers?
- What are the thoughts, feelings and reactions as bullying victims?
- What are the thoughts, feelings and reactions in witnessing bullying?
- If we have significant difference in cyberbullying experiences between females and males?
- Are there significant association between respondents' feelings when witnessing cases of bullying?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As a result, bullying practices were found to be very common. Most of the participants teenagers had been victims, perpetrators, or observers of bullying. Participants were asked about if they were bullied and if yes how many time in following we present the results.



● Yes
 ● No



● 1 time
 ● 2 times
 ● 3 times
 ● More than 3 times

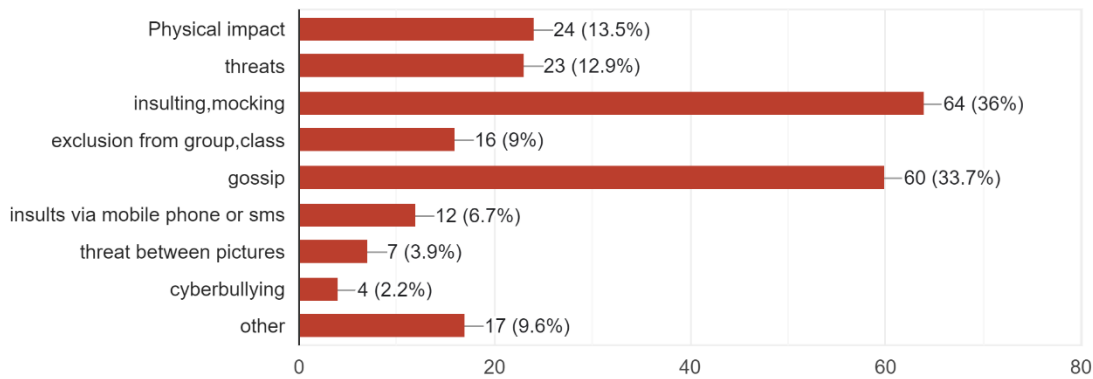
Graph. 1. Have you ever been bullied?

Graph. 2. Times of being bullying

From our results and the graph (graph. 1) we may see that from the total number 50.1% or of them have been bullied 39.5% or 177 of them were at least once bullied as it shown in graph. 2.

The participants were asked about different kinds of bullying they experienced at school, choosing some of the given options such as physical violence, gossip, comments, being left out of social groups, and cyberbullying.

What was the form of bullying you experienced at school?

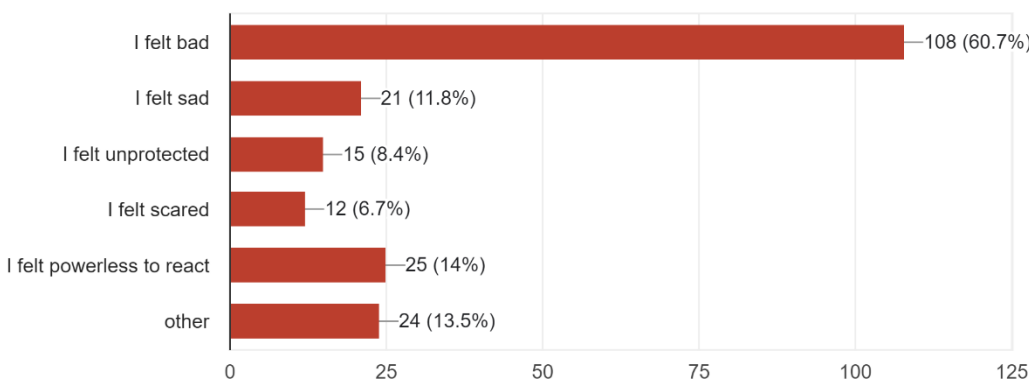


Graph. 3. The forms of bullying

Among the common forms of bullying 64 or 36% of them have been exposed in insulting and mocking 36% or 64 of them, gossip with 33.7 % or 60 of them, physical impact is the following form of bullying among 13.5% or 24 of them and threats in 12.9% or 23 participants. Other distributions are in smaller percentages 9.6% are other forms of bullying, following by exclusion from school groups with 9%, insults via mobile 6.7%, cyberbullying with 2.2% or 4 participants.

In our question about how they felt about being bullying, participants often described negative emotions such as sadness, fear, and a sense of helplessness, as showed in the following graph

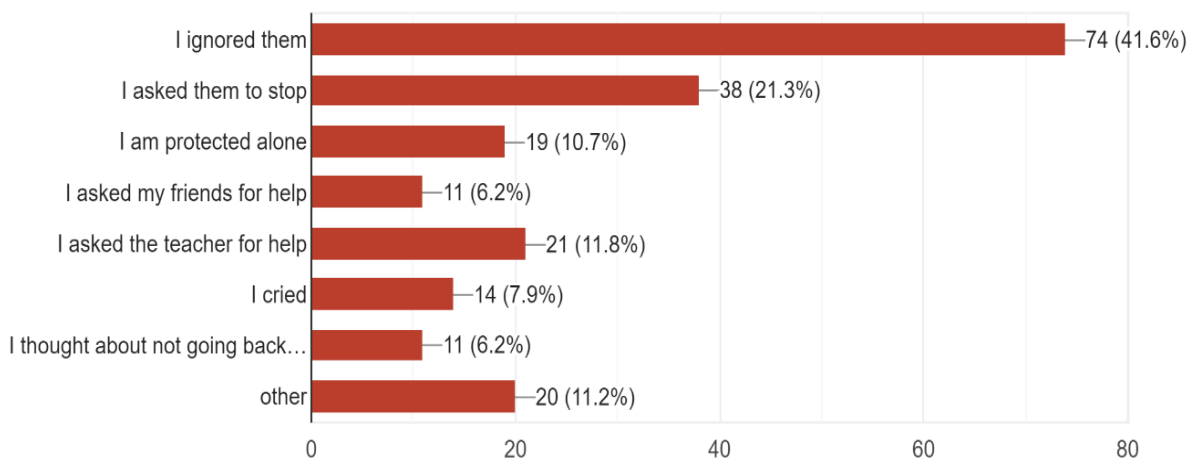
How did you feel when you were bullied?



Graph. 4. Emotional response

As shown in graph, the majority of them respectively 108 or 60.7%, reported that they felt bad, following by those who felt powerless to react with 14%, while 13.5% of them stated other emotional reactions. Feeling unprotected was reported among 8.4% and scared among 12 or 6.7% of participants. As a result, we were interested to see how they reacted as victims and on the next question what did they do while was being bullied and afterwards, the graph in follows gives as the answer and distribution among our participants.

What did you do while you were being bullied and afterwards?



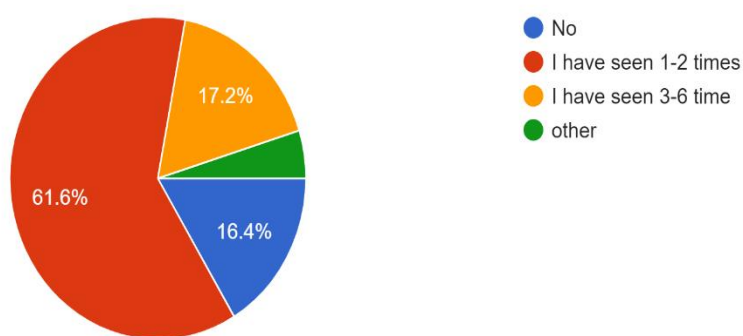
Graph. 5. Reactions as victims

From the results we may assume that majority of them respectively, 74 or 41.6% ignored the bullies, while 38 or 21.3% asked them to stop. As other options asking teacher for help was reported by 11.8% among them, protected alone 10.7%, cried 7.9% and 6.2% of them asked friends for help. Around 11.2% of them choose other as options without being specific what kind of reactions.

As stated above our objective was to explore the thoughts, feelings and reactions in witnessing bullying, that's for we asked them as first of they have seen bullying at school, if they so what form of, how they felt and what they did or how they reacted.

While witnesses reacted in a variety of ways, ranging from passive observation to active involvement

Have you recently seen cases of bullying at school?

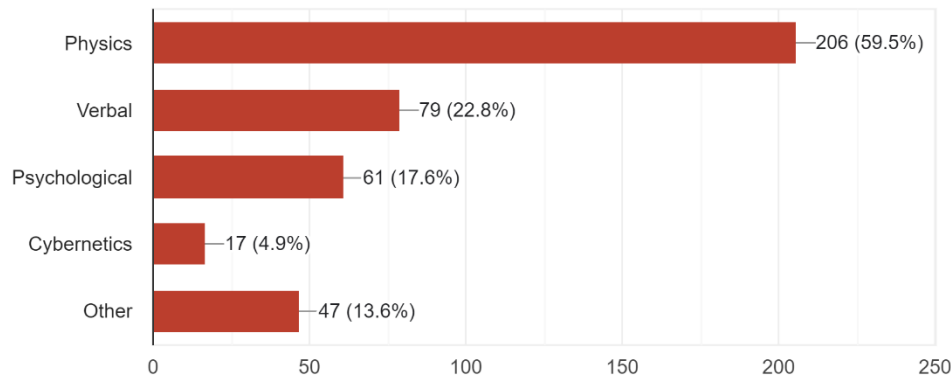


Graph. 6. Witnessing bullying

In our question if they recently seen cases of bullying at school, from the graph we may see that the majority of them 61.6% have seen 1-2 times, 17.2% have seen 3-6 times and 16.4% haven't seen at all.

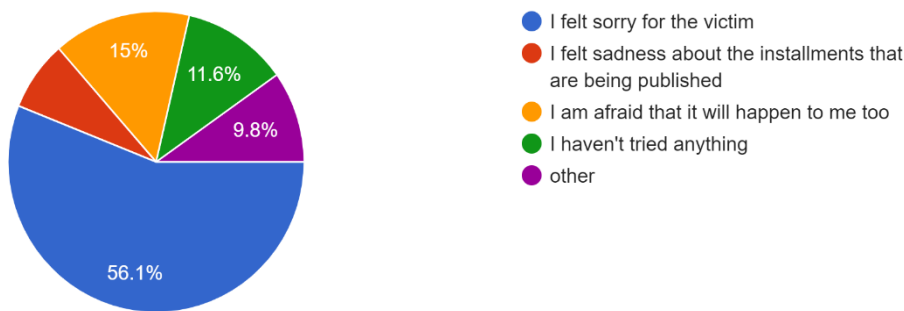
About the forms of bullying as we can see from the graph physical bullying is most common among teenagers since 206 or 59.5% of our participants reported that they have seen physical bullying, followed by verbal reported by 22.8% or by 79 of them, psychological bullying is next reported by 61 or 17.6% of them, cybernetics bullying was reported by 17 or 4.9% and around 13.4% or 47 of them reported other forms without specifying, as it shown in the following graph.

What form of bullying have you seen at school?



Graph. 7. Forms of bullying

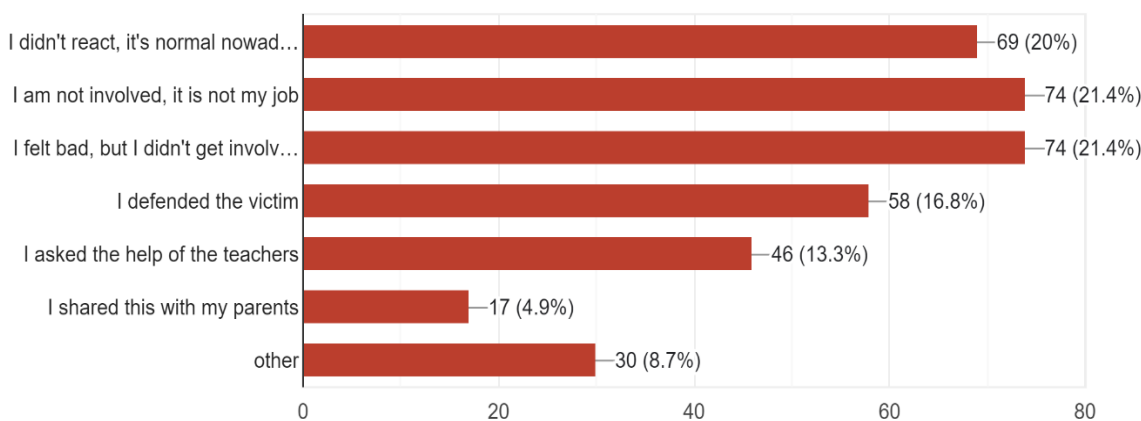
In the graph in following we presents the answer from the question bout how they felt in witnessing bullying



Graph. 8. Emotional response

As shown 56.1%, reported that they felt sorry for the victim, 15% reported that they were afraid that it will happen to them too and 11.6% said they didn't feel anything about.

When you saw sequences of bullying at school, how did you react?



Graph. 9. Reactions in witnessing bullying

Regarding to the reactions in witnessing bullying as shown in graph we may see that our participants are mainly divided in two groups. Mainly being indifferent and not involving and in one side defending the victim and asking for help of the teacher or parents in other side. We have the majority of the participants in same distribution with 21.4% or 74 per each category for two categories such as am not involved, its not my job and I felt bad but I didn't get involved. Followed by 69 or 20% of those who didn't react and then with the other group, where 16.8% or 58 of them reported that they defended the victim, 13.3% or 46 asked teachers for help, 30 of them reacted unspecified and responded for other option and 17 or 4.9% of them shared with their parents.

In our research, we used independent simple test (Table 3 and 4). to compare the mean cyberbullying score of the 215 female respondents who reported their experiences to a test value of 4, which represents the amount of cyberbullying experiences.

Table 3. One-Sample Statistics - cyberbullying

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
CYBERBULLYING	357	.01	.105	.006

Table 4. Independent simple test

Variable	Test Value	t-statistic	df	Significance
CYBERBULLYING	4	-715.019	356	< .001

The test resulted in a significant difference ($p < 0.001$), confirming that there is a significant difference in cyberbullying experiences between females and males, suggesting that males has a significantly lower mean score on "CYBERBULLYING" compared to females. However, following deeper analysis, it is worth noting that just four of the 215 female respondents claimed to have experienced cyberbullying. The limited sample size raises questions regarding the reliability and generalizability of the findings.

While the statistical test may show a significant difference, the practical implications of these findings may be restricted due to the small number of respondents who reported cyberbullying incidents. As a result, these findings should be interpreted and generalized with care. Further research with a larger and more representative sample of female responders is required to give more solid insights into the occurrence and impact of cyberbullying encounters among females.

Our last research question was to examine and explore the significant differences between respondents' emotional responses and their responses to bullying

Table 5. Emotional responses to bullying incidents

	N	%
a)I felt sorry for the victim	194	54.3%
b)I felt sadness about the installments that are being published	26	7.3%
c)I am afraid that it will happen to me too	52	14.6%
d)I haven't tried anything	40	11.2%

The table above displays participants' reactions when questioned about their thoughts after witnessing incidences of bullying. Respondents reported a variety of feelings, including grief, anger, empathy, fear, and discomfort. Many people expressed feelings of powerlessness or a desire to interfere in the bullying situation

(Table 3). These various replies demonstrate the complicated emotional responses that people may have when they witness instances of bullying. To see if these differences are statically significant we performed t-test and here are the results from our participants.

Table 6. One-Sample Statistics

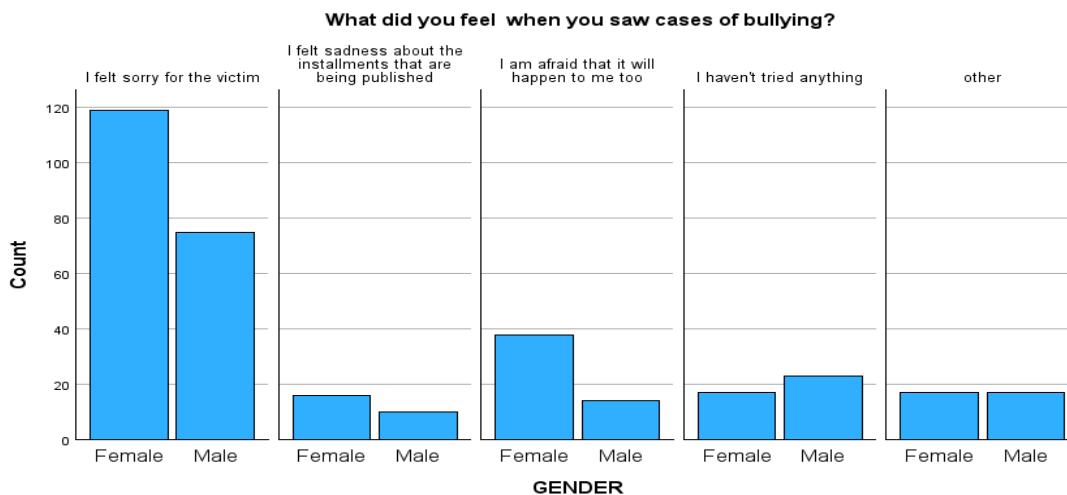
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I felt sorry for the victim	357	.54	.499	.026

Table 7. One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 90				Mean Difference
	t	df	Significance		
			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	
I felt sorry for the victim	-3388.526	356	<.001	<.001	-89.457

The one-sample t-test was used to compare the mean rating of respondents feeling sorry for the victim while witnessing bullying incidents to a test value of 90 (Table 6 and 7). The results showed a substantial difference ($p < 0.001$), rejecting the null hypothesis. Specifically, 194 (54.4%) of the 357 individuals questioned picked the option "I felt sorry for the victim." When seeing bullying instances, a significant number of respondents expressed sympathy for the victim.

Based on our statistical analysis, we may say that respondents' sentiments after observing bullying situations are significantly associated with the response choice "I felt sorry for the victim." When confronted with incidents of bullying, the vast majority of responders expressed sympathy for the victim as in following Graph. Here again we have differences in the gender bases as shown in graph (graph.10), from where we may see that female experience higher level of emotional response than male participants



Graph 10. Emotional Responses to Witnessed Bullying Incidents by Gender

Teenagers are increasingly concerned about cyberbullying, which is defined as destructive behavior carried out via technological means that results in psychological discomfort. Research shows that the incidence rates and overlap between victims and bullies varies. Because of its emphasis on technology and anonymity, cyberbullying is different from traditional bullying and presents obstacles for response. Bullies display problematic conduct, while victims may face mental anguish and a reduction in their academic performance. In

general, comprehensive approaches including legislators, parents, and healthcare providers are essential for lessening the effects of cyberbullying. (Peebles, 2024)

In a recent study conducted by (Källmén & Hallgren, 2021) examining trends in bullying and mental health problems among adolescents in Stockholm, Sweden, it was found that while the prevalence of bullying remained stable, there was a significant increase in mental health problems, particularly among older girls. Using data from a population-based school survey spanning from 2014 to 2020 and involving 32,722 students aged 15 and 18, associations between bullying and mental health were analyzed.

After adjusting for various factors including demographic, socio-economic, and school-related variables, the study revealed that being bullied at school was significantly associated with higher odds of mental health problems. Notably, boys exhibited a four-fold higher prevalence of mental health problems compared to non-bullied boys, while girls showed a 2.5-fold higher prevalence compared to non-bullied girls. These findings underscore the importance of addressing bullying in schools as a critical factor contributing to adolescent mental health (Håkan Källmén., 2022).

Bullying may have a lot of negative impacts. Bullied individuals may have anxiety or depression. They can have physical sickness. Their academic standing might deteriorate. In severe situations, they could attempt self-harm. Bullies who injure other people also experience this. As adults, they are more prone to experience mental health issues. It might be difficult for them to build wholesome connections. They also run a greater chance of having criminal convictions. (Britannica Kids, n.d.)

Bullying may have a serious and long-lasting impact on children's emotional and mental health, whether it occurs in person or online (cyberbullying). This can result in problems including substance misuse, despair, and anxiety. By teaching their children about bullying, encouraging open communication, supporting good conduct, boosting self-confidence, and setting an example of respectful behavior, parents may help prevent and handle bullying in children. Physical injuries, behavioral changes, scholastic deterioration, and emotional suffering are all indicators of bullying. Parents who see that their kid is being bullied should talk to the school, reassure the child, listen to them sympathetically, and offer continuous support. Parents should talk to their children who are bullying others, investigate the reasons behind the conduct, provide a positive example of healthy coping skills, examine their own actions, and apply the proper sanctions. In general, successful bullying management and the establishment of a safe atmosphere depend heavily on proactive parental participation. (UNICEF, n.d.)

Collaboration between educators, parents, school administration, and students is essential to effectively addressing bullying. Instructors and administrators need to be on the lookout, act quickly, and include parents and kids in safety campaigns. It is crucial to provide a supportive environment and set clear standards for conduct. In addition to teaching coping mechanisms, setting limits with technology, and reporting occurrences to the police and school, parents should also look out for indicators of bullying. The parents of children who bully others should teach their kids, provide an example of good behavior, and help them with their self-esteem problems. Pupils should report bullying, abstain from taking revenge, and look for group protection. In general, fostering healthy connections, attending to the underlying reasons of bullying, and providing assistance to victims are essential to establishing a secure and welcoming school atmosphere. (American Psychological Association., 2011)

CONCLUSION

Bullying is a common problem in schools that affects a lot of teens all over the world. This study shows how common, different kinds, and how kids ages 12 to 20 feel about bullying. The results show that bullying is common, as many of the subjects said they had been bullied, been bullied themselves, or seen bullying happen.

Different kinds of bullying were named, such as physical violence, emotional abuse, social rejection, and cyberbullying. This shows that the problem has many sides. People's feelings about bullying went from caring about the target to being scared and powerless. These complicated responses show how bullying affects the

minds of both sufferers and observers. Personal traits, family relationships, school environments, and social factors can all lead to bullying.

Effective intervention methods, like educational programs and help from school counselors, were named as possible ways to stop bullying. But the study also shows how important it is to have complete anti-bullying programs that deal with all the different parts of bullying and offerspecialized help to victims, bullies, and people who are just watching.

For a school to be safe and welcoming for everyone, teachers, parents, school officials, and students must all work together. Teachers and managers need to be on the lookout for and deal with bullying cases. Parents are also very important in spotting signs of bullying and supporting their kids. Students should be told to report bullying, stay safe, and look for safety in groups.

In conclusion, preventing bullying needs a multifaceted method that includes preventative steps from many groups. We can make schools where all students feel safe, accepted, and valued if we all work together. This will help teens' mental health and academic success.

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