Peer Bullying and Mental Health

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Overview

- Bullying – what is it?
- Bullying ≠ conduct problems
- What are the consequences?
- Implications
Definition of bullying

Bullying is defined as

1. aggressive behaviour or **intentional** harm-doing by an individual or group that
2. is carried out **repeatedly** over time in
3. an interpersonal relationship characterized by an **imbalance of power**
Types of bullying

• Direct/Overt
  - Name calling, teasing, racial slurs
  - Obscene gestures
  - Hitting, kicking, pushing
  - Threatening, stealing

• Relational
  - Leaving out on purpose
  - Spreading nasty rumours
  - Purposeful damage to social relationships
Victims and bullies – A simplification!
Major Roles in bullying

- "Pure" Bullies - perpetrate the aggression; never victims
- "Pure" Victims - being bullied; never bully others
- Bully/victims – get victimised and bully others frequently
- Neutral – not involved in bullying
Bullying: An Evolutionary Adaptation?
Bullying ≠ Conduct Disorder

- Found in modern society, modern hunter-gatherers and ancient civilizations
- It is *not* maladaptation in societies at a staggering scale but does serve an adaptive purpose for a few (bullies).
- **Evolutionary**: access to resources, survival (protection), dominance, reduced stress and more mating opportunities
- Modern Society (resources – access jobs, money and status to gain access to reproductive success)
- Bullying should be found in all SES groups and increased the scarcer and more unequal the resources.
Bullies are found in all SES groups

Bullying Perpetration and Low Socioeconomic Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Odds Ratios (95% CI)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alikasifoglu</td>
<td>Affluence</td>
<td>0.86 (0.68; 1.09)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alikasifoglu</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.91 (0.71; 1.16)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barboza</td>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>Flouri</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>1.07 (0.99; 1.16)</td>
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<td>Occupation</td>
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<td>Jansen (b)</td>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>Social Class</td>
<td>1.77 (1.02; 3.07)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shetgiri</td>
<td>Affluence</td>
<td>1.00 (0.80; 1.24)</td>
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<td><strong>Synthesis</strong></td>
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<td><strong>1.14 (1.02; 1.27)</strong></td>
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Tippett, N. & Wolke, D. (submitted) Bullying and Socioeconomic Status: A meta-analysis.
Society: Income Inequality and Bullying others (r=.62)

Being Bullied: A normal rite of passage or adverse consequences?
Associations with Bullying Roles: Cross-sectional or short term longitudinal Studies

- Physical health problems
10th Grade Bullying History and Physical and Mental Health Outcomes

National news

Schoolboy ‘hanged himself after bullying’

Council investigates claims that death followed intimidation

Laura Smith

A 12-year-old boy who died at a railway line in Lancashire, England, after being bullied, was hanged himself after listening to threats from his peers, an inquest heard yesterday.

Mr. Smith, who was found dead in a wooded area, had been harassed by other boys, who told him that he would be hung if he did not stop attending school. The bullying had continued even after the boy had left school and was due to return to his family home.

An inquest jury agreed that the boy had been bullied to death, but that the bullying was not the direct cause of his death.

Modern bullies are seeking victims through cyberspace

A new Study has revealed that cyberbullies are increasingly targeting young people through social media and other online platforms.

Liam Kirk, 14, was bullied by a group of teenage bullies who had been posting embarrassing videos of him on social media.

The bullying had continued even after Liam had left school and was due to return to his family home.

Bullied boy, 11, dies after pills overdose

A 12-year-old boy who died after ingesting a toxic mixture of pills was bullied at school for weeks, his family claimed yesterday.

The boy’s parents said they had been told by teachers that their son was being bullied by other children, but that they had been unable to stop the bullying.

Years of bullying drove our son to kill himself

By Sarah Getty

A 15-year-old boy who was bullied for years by his classmates has been found dead in a tracks, his family said today.

The family said they had been told by police that their son had hanged himself after being threatened with violence by other children.

The inquest jury agreed that the bullying was the direct cause of the boy’s death.

Boy killed by train ‘as he fled bullies’

Overdose girl, 13, was ‘terrified of bullies’

By Nicola Woolcock

A 13-year-old girl who died after taking an overdose of pills was bullied by her classmates, her parents said yesterday.

Lauria’s parents said they had been told by teachers that their daughter was being bullied by other children, but that they had been unable to stop the bullying.

Bullying took pics as they broke arm

‘Lad’s school terror’ reported seeing eight boys chase

A 14-year-old boy who died after being hit by a car while crossing the road was bullied by his schoolmates, his parents said yesterday.

The parents said they had been told by police that their son had been hit by a car while crossing the road, but that they had been unable to stop the bullying.

Zombie suicide of bullied girl, 13

Liam Kirk: ‘Hurt in bull class’

A 13-year-old girl who died after being hit by a car while crossing the road was bullied by her classmates, her parents said yesterday.

The parents said they had been told by police that their daughter had been hit by a car while crossing the road, but that they had been unable to stop the bullying.

Suicide: Kirsty Botton
Mother and teacher report of bullying and suicide ideation & suicidal behaviour

Being Bullied <11 yrs & Self-harm at 17 yrs

- Self-harm → defined as when somebody intentionally damages or injures their body

- Typical self-harm behaviour → cutting, burning or swallowing pills

![Pie chart showing that 73% of self-harm is without an intention to die and 27% with an intention to die.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self harm</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention to die</td>
<td>27%</td>
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- Being bullied directly increased the risk of self-harm (Population attributable Fraction (PAF) > 20%)

- It means: if bullying could be eliminated (and everything else stays the same) 20% of self-harm cases could be prevented!

- Compare this to obesity (BMI > 30) - it occurs in 15% of the population - but accounts for only 2.8% of all myocardial infarctions

Chronicity of Victimization (Child Report) & Psychotic Experiences at 18 years

Model B: Adjusted for Sex, any DSM-IV diagnosis, IQ, internalizing/externalizing behaviour
Model C: Adjusted for Sex, any DSM-IV diagnosis, IQ, internalizing/externalizing behaviour, depression symptoms at 12, 13 or 14 years and psychotic experiences at 12 years

Impact of Bullying in Childhood on Adult Health, Wealth, Crime, and Social Outcomes

Dieter Wolke¹, William E. Copeland², Adrian Angold², and E. Jane Costello²

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Summary: Adult Outcomes of Being Bullied

- **Health**: Psychiatric, serious illness, smoking, slow illness recovery
- **Wealth**: Poor school performance, less income, dismissed from jobs, poor in managing finances
- **Social**: Poor relationships with parents, few friends, no confidante

Victimisation

Baby

Toddler

School

Teen

Adult
Bullying gets under the skin: Roles in Bullying and chronic low grade inflammation (c-reactive protein levels changes in blood)
Copeland, Wolke et al. (submitted)
Summary of Findings

- **Being bullied** by peers has **wide ranging and non-specific effects on mental health** – it increases the risk of psychopathology (from depression to psychotic experiences and suicide), general health, wealth and wellbeing.

- **Bully/victims** and **chronically bullied** children have the **worst long term outcomes**

- **Bullies**: *no adverse* effects on health, little adverse effect on wealth but is related to problematic social relationships in adulthood.
Implications

• Bullying is highly prevalent (15-20%)

• Mental and Physical Health problems

• Social problems and school avoidance

• It affects the economy (integrating in the work place, holding down jobs; working in teams)
Why is dealing with Bullying politically acceptable?

- Bullies are found in all social status groups – whether in inner city schools or affluent neighbourhoods

- It is a universal problem faced by children and parents from all social groups

- Policies will have a universal impact across the whole of society

- Dealing with bullying is likely to make society healthier, more productive, less risky and happier
Thanks for listening