Predictors of Bullying

Adapted from:


This study is a meta-analytic review of research on bullying during childhood and adolescence. Findings suggest that the different social contexts (school, home, peer groups) covary significantly with bullying groups. It is suggested that an effective program would consist of behavioral parenting training combined with some form of positive peer-reporting intervention at school.

Practitioners should consider personal characteristics of the child or youth when developing clinical strategies and supports. Both shared and unique components may be necessary, for example, problem-solving skills training would be a shared intervention component whereas improving normative beliefs about others would be a unique component implemented specifically for bullies.

Most current intervention programs reviewed emphasize the use of universal interventions that rely on contextual strategies to address bullying. These are practices that involve the entire population of children within a particular context, such as well-enforced anti-bullying rules, peer reporting systems, etc. However, it is apparent that bullying often requires more than universal interventions – these programs should involve the first layer of prevention efforts, with more intensive tiers of support provided to meet individual challenges.

Some findings suggest that interventions that reduce aggression should also effectively reduce bullying, since the predictors of bullying are indistinguishable from those of aggression. Interestingly, most bullying intervention programs being used emphasize changing the context of bullying (without much empirical support), but most interventions for aggression are geared toward the individual. There exist multiple individual and contextual factors that influence bullying. The most promising programs focus on intervening at the levels of the individual, the peer ecology, and the broader contexts of the youths involved.

Individual Predictors of Bullying:
- Externalizing behavior
- Other-related cognitions

Individual Predictors of Victimization:
- Peer status (negative)
- Social competence (negative)

Individual Predictors of Bully Victim Status:
- Self-related cognitions
- Social competence

**Contextual Predictors of Bullying:**
- Peer influence
- Community factors

**Contextual Predictors of Victimization:**
- Peer status
- Community factors

**Contextual Predictors of Bully Victim Status:**
- Peer status
- Peer influence

The **typical bully** is described as:
- one who exhibits significant externalizing behavior,
- has internalizing symptoms,
- has both social competence and academic challenges,
- possesses negative attitudes and beliefs about others,
- has negative self-related cognitions,
- has trouble resolving problems with others,
- comes from a family environment characterized by conflict and poor parental monitoring,
- is more likely to perceive his or her school as having a negative atmosphere,
- is influenced by negative community factors, and
- tends to be negatively influenced by peers. (pp. 75-76.)

The **typical bully** is described as:
- One who is likely to demonstrate internalizing symptoms,
- Engage in externalizing behavior,
- Lack adequate social skills,
- Possess negative self-related cognitions,
- Experience difficulties in solving social problems,
- Come from negative community, family, and school environments, and
- Is noticeably rejected and isolated by peers.

The typical bully victim is one who has:

- Comorbid externalizing and internalizing problems,
- Holds significantly negative attitudes and beliefs about self and others,
- Is low in social competence,
- Does not have adequate social problem-solving skills,
- Performs poorly academically, and
- Is not only rejected and isolated by peers but also negatively influenced by peers with whom he/she interacts.