

A Correlational Study between Bullying and Psychological Well-Being of Students amongst Universities in Pakistan

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Abstract— Bullying is a voluntary act performed by an individual to intentionally harm someone either physically, emotionally, or psychologically. Psychological or mental wellbeing can be termed when an individual is content with his or her life regarding their physical, emotional, and psychological health. Bullying in academic setups is a growing concern globally; it has become a serious matter in developing country like Pakistan and since last five years the concern has raised substantially in the Pakistani educational setups. Bullying is not only problematic for the victim but also any individual who witnesses it. It affects someone's physical and psychological well-being and raises their risk of self-injury and suicide. Taking into account the local relevance of the topic, this study was planned. The aim of the study was to establish a relationship concerning bullying and psychological well-being and emphasize the effect of bullying on an individual's psychological wellbeing. Quantitative data were gathered from different universities in Karachi, Pakistan. Questionnaire from a book "Bully-proof" by Gail Dore was used to measure bullying and the Ryff's psychological wellbeing scale was administered to measure psychological

wellbeing the obtained data was analyzed Statistical program for social sciences using correlation and regression analysis. Results indicated that bullying negatively affects the psychological well-being of students.

Keywords: Bullying, Mental health, Psychological well-being, Stress.

I. INTRODUCTION

Worldwide there is an increasing recognition of mental health and its different aspects. Although the recognition to mental health has been present in the society since earlier times, the highest level of recognition received by mental health was during the worldwide pandemic of COVID-19. Even though, numerous research is available to study what mental health is and how it affects an individual, there is still space when it comes to national recognition. Pakistan is one of the countries where mental health has long been a concern similar to the other under developed countries of the world (Shagufta et al., 2021). Mental health problems have risen to alarming level in the younger population since past few years, the impact of which has been evident in the major domains of young people's life such as education and career. The rate of illiteracy has risen notably. School fear

and avoidance might seem to be one of the causes in this regard. Along with multiple precipitating factors, bullying is one of the major reasons why young population is seen out of school. Weak coordination between the parents and educational management has aggravated the problem as the parents get little opportunity to interfere in the matter. The cases are either not reported or they are often not dealt adequately (Academia, 2023).

According to a report by Academia (2023) in Pakistan since the past five years the rate of bullying has increased significantly which indicated the severity of the condition. There are multiple reasons for that such as lack of interest and policy making at the local administration level and dearth of research in the educational field seems to be some of the major hurdles.

In Pakistan, there is an increasing scope towards positive psychology and constructs, but limited studies are available regarding the effects of a healthy mind in practical life. Also, there are limited facilities available in Pakistan which ensure a stable mental health. Most of the population is underserved since there are few facilities, particularly in the public sector, and the investment in the health portfolio in the private sector is limited as well.

Bearing in mind the importance of the subject with reference to the local context, this study was initiated. This effort would be productive and will add in the previous body of research to enlighten the factors such as bullying in relation to psychological wellbeing and how negative school experience impedes young people's academic as well as future success.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bullying is a usual episode that can have serious unfavorable consequences on a person's mental health, including elevated rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidal thinking. Due to the social and academic pressures they experience, university students may be at a higher risk of suffering bullying than other groups. Issues regarding the prevalence of bullying, suicidal ideation, and psychological health between university undergraduates in Pakistan were discussed.

A sample of 808 university students in Pakistan were interviewed for the study which discovered that roughly 45% of respondents had experienced bullying. Participants who acknowledged bullying were also more likely to express signs of anxiety, sadness, and suicide thoughts. This study emphasized the necessity of tackling this issue and the enormous consequence that victimization can have on university students' mental health. Bullying and mental well-being problems among university students were strongly correlated (Bibi et al., 2021).

Bullying is a major issue that has recently received increased attention among college students. Bullying was described by Cowie and Myers (2015) as planned behavior that is recurrent and involves a power disparity between the victim and the offender. Bullying can be physical, verbal, psychological, and it can occur both offline and online. Bullying has many negative repercussions on college students that can be catastrophic, such as sadness, anxiety, low self-esteem, and in severe cases, suicide. There are many reasons why bullying is so common at campuses. One important element is the competitive mentality that permeates many institutions and can foster an aggressive and hostile environment. Additionally, the anonymity provided by social media platforms has aided in the growth of bullying, a problem that is becoming more and more prevalent in campuses. The detrimental effects of bullying on the mental health and wellbeing of university students are well documented.

According to research done in the US, 24% of college students said they had experienced bullying. In a similar vein, a survey carried out in the UK discovered that 15% of college students had experienced bullying. These results imply that university students frequently encounter bullying, which emphasizes the need for interventions and support services to address this issue.

Bullying is a prevalent issue that, particularly among youth, can have detrimental impacts on mental health. Bullying has been associated to increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, according to a published meta-analysis. Bullying may also have an extended negative impact on mental health. Studies show that those who were

bullied as children or teenagers are more likely to face mental health problems as adults (Modecki, 2014).

Sinkkonen (2014) observed 5% of college students had experienced direct or indirect verbal abuse on campus.

Khan and Reza (2000) conducted studies on Pakistani high school and college students and found that bullying had adverse effects on academic performance, self-esteem, and depressive symptoms, similar to those found in North American and European studies (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). According to Khan and Raza (2000) the top three often occurring experiences were verbal humiliation, robbery, and beating. The consequences of bullying by peers and teachers on kids' psychological well-being were investigated. Children who are bullied by instructors but not by classmates exhibit oppositional behavior, lose faith in other people, and feel miserable. Results differed according to the genders of the perpetrator and victim. Regarding the incidence of violence in a society, the contextual elements that lead to bullying in schools were examined. Ideas for future research that might inform school laws were also discussed.

The consequences of bullying on emotional health were prospectively examined by Pottinger, (2009). The initial study found that, even after adjusting for social ties and demographic characteristics, being bullied at the age of 13 was linked to an elevated risk of anxiety and depression symptoms the following year (Bond et al. 2001). In addition to controls for issues at the beginning of the school year, the second study revealed that bully-victims had higher levels of hostility and externalizing problems than kids who were not tormented (Kim et al.2006).

Investigating more into the factors of how bullying effects individual's mental wellbeing this study was intended. The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between bullying and psychological wellbeing in the regional level and how it could add into the existing body of research that would be beneficial for the counselors, parents, school

administration and other related parties in the local level.

➤ *Significance of the study*

This study is essential since there hasn't been much awareness of bullying as a problem in Pakistan. It will enable not only students but parents also to understand the concept. The research will empower the victims of bullying to identify themselves and help find methods to avoid being bullied. It will serve as groundwork for other researchers involved to get information on to how to deal with bullying and what are the impacts that an individual can go through if the cycle is not broken. The research will help aid the institutions in combatting bullying once they are made aware of its context and its affects.

➤ *Objective of the Study*

- *To investigate the relationship between bullying and psychological health.*
- *To examine at how bullying affects a student's psychological health.*
- *To describe the broad effects of bullying.*
- *To study the harmful effects of bullying on psychological health.*

III. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The current study employed a correlation survey based approach. 354 students were selected using convenient sampling technique from different universities of Karachi, Pakistan. After obtaining consent from the participants, the survey was Questionnaires were administered. "Bully-proof" by Gail Dore was used to measure bullying and the Ryff's psychological wellbeing scale was used to measure psychological wellbeing. The data gathered was thereafter analyzed via Statistical program for social sciences (SPSS) software.

IV. RESULTS

According to the research assumption a significant relationship amongst bullying and the psychological wellbeing of the students would be examined below

Table 1
Correlation between bullying and the psychological wellbeing

| | Psychological wellbeing Pearson Correlation Sig.(2-tailed) |
|----------|--|
| bullying | -.294* .012 -.02 |

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results of correlation indicated in Table 1, suggest negative correlations $r = -.294$ ($p < .05$) between bullying and psychological wellbeing in university students.

Table 2
Simple linear regression between bullying and psychological wellbeing

| Model | R | R ² | Adj R ² | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .294 ^a | .086 | .073 | 14.722 |

Table 3
Simple linear regression between bullying and psychological wellbeing

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|--------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 Regression | 1454.009 | 1 | 1454.009 | 6.709 | .012 ^b |
| 1 Residual | 15387.334 | 71 | 216.723 | | |
| Total | 16841.342 | 72 | | | |

Table 4
Regression coefficients of bullying on Psychological wellbeing

| variables | B | SE | B | t | p |
|-----------|--------|-------|-------|--------|------|
| Constant | 92.585 | 4.739 | | | |
| Bullying | -6.093 | 2.352 | -.294 | -2.590 | .012 |

Note. CI= Confidence interval

Tables 2, 3 & 4 show the impact of Bullying on Psychological wellbeing. The R² value of .086 revealed that the predictors explained 8.6% variance in the outcome variable with $F(71, 72) = 6.709$, $p < .05$. The findings revealed that bullying predicted psychological wellbeing ($\beta = -.294$, $p < .05$).

V DISCUSSION

This research investigated bullying of students in universities of Karachi, Pakistan, and its relationship with the psychological well-being of students. Bullying is a widespread problem that, especially among undergraduates, has serious effects on individual psychological health. In recent years, bullying has drawn a lot of attention in Pakistan due to its prevalence and the effects it has on students' mental health. While there are studies that show the harmful consequences of bullying on students, more studies must be done that concentrate exclusively on university students rather than students in schools and colleges. This discussion intends to analyze the connection between bullying and the psychological health of university students in Pakistan. research evidences are reported to bolster our claims. The results are consistent with lower levels of psychological well-being in university pupils who are victims of bullying. Students' life is at a crossroads when they move from high school to university, potentially exposing them to unfamiliar social dynamics and difficulties. Studies show that university freshmen may be particularly vulnerable to bullying incidents. Bullying is a personal experience and The relationship between bullying and student's psychological well being does play a strong role in predicting bullying incidents. The persistence of bullying from one educational level to the next is concerning; in some situations, the same bullies who have victimized

kids in the past are committing the same violations. There is ample proof that bullying can lead to a vicious cycle in some situations. The victim of bullying experienced psychological symptoms, which exacerbated the victim's susceptibility to bullying (Vartia-Väänänen, 2003). Bullying and poor psychological health among undergraduates have been connected repeatedly. Much researches have emphasized how bullying has a detrimental effect on different aspects of psychological well-being, as determined by the Ryff's Scale of Psychological Well-being (Ryff, 1989). According to the results of this research, it can be seen that greater intensities of bullying is linked with reduced levels of psychological well-being.

VI CONCLUSION

This research highlights the importance of psychological well-being of students, which is the subjective emotion of joy. It is, in other words, the mental health of the individual. How the person feels about oneself and others. Being in a good state of psychological well-being enables an individual to reach the highest potential of their lives in different aspects. However, a deteriorating psychological well-being deeply impacts the individual where they do not consider themselves to be happy or feel pleasure in life.

The research also highlights the traumatizing consequences of bullying on the emotional wellbeing of students. Bullying is the recurring instances of unprovoked aggression when the victim suffers bodily or psychological harm and there is an difference in authority between the aggressor(s) and the sufferer.

By analyzing and examining the relationship between bullying and its effect on the psychological well-being of students, it can be concluded that, bullying, regardless of any type or form, can cause traumatic effects on the emotional well-being of the students. A low psychological well-being can cause a student to have less autonomy, their purpose in life also decreases significantly, they lose environmental mastery, students do not build positive relationships with others, their self-acceptance and confidence also significantly decreases. Low psychological well being due to bullying can impact the day-to-day activities of their lives, can affect their academic performance,

shatter their confidence, and lose trust in the world and in themselves. Therefore, it is important to ensure that bullying is reduced as much as possible in universities and educational institutions to allow the students to lead a life with a good mental health, a high psychological well being and reach their highest potential.

Although, a suitable amount of research has been shown regarding bullying in university students, additional research should be encouraged in understanding how specifically university students go through bullying, and what can be done to reduce it.

A strong educational system must be present and should participate in evaluating the mental health of their students through several policies, education plans, seminars and should create a safe nurturing environment for the students where they can freely express the issues they face in their lives.

In the long run, victims often tend to develop psychological illnesses which causes them to drop out of universities which further reduces their chances of employment (Fergusson et al., 2007). These overall decreases the life quality of the individual and impacts the economy of the country in a negative way.

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