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Research paper



Peer Victimization: Hitting Psychological Distress, Self Esteem and Psychological Well-being among Adolescents

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Abstract

Children have to face a lot of problems related to their academics, coping with society, peer relations, bulling and victimization. Research has reported increasing rate of bulling at school and colleges in Pakistan. Bullying is a public health problem and has serious negative impacts for the bully and for the victim, causing serious social and personal problems. This research was aimed to explore the relational aspects of bullying in form of peer victimization, psychological distress and self-esteem among adolescence. Sample was consisted of 200 students; their age varies from 10-17 years from different institutes of Multan. Bully Scale [1] subscale peer victimization was used in this study. Psychological Distress Scale [2], State Self-esteem Scale [3] and Psychological Well-being Scale [4] were used. Results suggested that being victimized by peers is significantly related to high levels of psychological distress, low self-esteem and psychological wellbeing. Findings indicated that distress is high among peer victims of bullying as compare of bullies. Significant gender differences were found. This research suggests that bulling prevention trainings, workshops and seminars must be part of school education. Parents need to be aware of bullying attitudes and have concern for wellbeing and self-esteem.

Keywords: *Bully, peer victimize, psychological distress, Psychological Well being, self esteem*.

1. Introduction

Children in schools and colleges have to face a lot of problems related to their academics, coping with society, peer relations, bullying and victimization. Increasing rate of bulling is reported at school and colleges in Pakistan. Bullying is a public health problem and has serious negative impacts for the bully and for the victim as well. Bullying is a causing factor of serious social and personal problems such as self harm, conflicts, effective socialization and many others.

1.1. Bullying

Bullying has been defined as a type of oral aggression, which cannot observe aggression readily. Bullying include one's threats to another person without any physical aggression [5]. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2004) conducted a survey entitled Managing conflict at work, defined bullying as a persistent behavior towards an individual by intimidation, dishonor, harassment, deliberately harmful and destroying self esteem andconfidence of the victim. Harassment and bullying is associated with severe mental health drawbacks, which result into suicidal ideation, suicide attempts and chronic depression [6].

National Information Institutes of Health has reported [7] that children who bullied once in a week or more have poor physical health as well as mental health like; sleep disorders (insomnia), depression, anxiety and suicide idealization than children who are not bullied. Some of the consequences of being bullied may have onset in later adulthood. Children who are the targets of bullying have reported low self-esteem and face emotional problems, like depression and anxiety. Such students have poor concentration on homework and usually escape from school. Bullied youngsters also experienced behavioral problems; smoking, drug uses, poor grades and are more engage in criminal activities (Diana, 2010).

1.2. Peer Victimization

Peer victimization is experiences of being bullied as social, physical and psychological harm from peer group or from a friend. According to researches children who are bullied by their friends are more likely to be alone, unhappy, face difficulties to make friends, have more health issues and bully victims can do suicide as well. Peer victimization can measure by self report inventories but data privacy and confidentiality should be assured [8].

1.3. Psychological Distress

Psychological distress is a general term used to describe unpleasant feelings or emotions that affects person's level of functioning ordiscomfort which interferes with our daily life.Psychological distress is a subjective experience, assumed to be a factor of anxiety, sadness and other symptoms of mental illness, which can result into negative self image, negative thoughts about environment and others. Mental or psychological distress is a personal (internal) life experiences base on troubles, confusions and other symptoms of mental illness (psychiatry) for example conflicts, anxiety, rage, hallucination and depression. Different circumstances can also increase mental distress or illness like; lack of sleep, stress, state of sorrow over the death or departure, use of drugs, accident and abuse [9]. Psychological distress refers to the consistent feelings

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of nervousness, depressed mood, anxiousness and sadness. Increased distress leads to sever depression, emotional vulnerability, irritability and other mental disorders [10].

1.4. Self Esteem

Self-esteem refers to an individual's sense of his or her value or worth, or theextent to which a person values ones 'self, appreciates, prizes, or likes him or herself. Self-esteem is considered the evaluative component of self-concept, a broader representation of the self that includes cognitive and behavioral aspects as well as evaluative or affective ones. While the construct is most often used to refer to a global sense of self-worth, narrow concepts such as appearance esteem or body esteem are used to imply a sense of self-esteem in more specific areas. Self esteem is a global sense of self-worth, narrow concepts such as appearance esteem or body esteem are used to imply a sense of self-esteem in more specific areas [11].

1.5 Psychological Well Being

[12] defined well-being as what people actually can do and are able to do. [13] explained wellbeing as a simple notion of well-being (i.e. 'a life going well') as person's good, benefit, advantage, interest, prudential value, welfare, happiness, flourishing, utility, quality of life, and thriving. well-being as a form of happiness "a global assessment of a person's quality of life chosen by him/her self. [14] defined two dimensions of well-being; absence of subjective illness (self-assessed) and absence of objective illness (ascription). Psychological well-being is usually conceptualized as some combination of positive affective states such as happiness (the hedonic perspective) and functioning with optimal effectiveness in individual and social life (the eudaimonic perspective) [15,16] defined psychological well-being as a combination of positive feelings, happiness, capabilities, and life satisfaction.

Psychological wellbeing result into physical health, active neural brain activities and genetic patterns. Research has evidence that bullying, verbal aggression and violence at school effects on youth in their later life. Significantly increased risk of self conflicts, somatic disorders, anxiety, depression, low self esteem and suicidal ideation are reported. Low social interactions, isolation, low moral support from family and peer groupsare perceived by the bullying victims [17,18,19,20,21]. Victims of school bullyingare more likely to suffer psychological maladjustment such as sadness, low self-esteem, loneliness, and depression [22].

[23] found that bullying is associated with serious psychological distress such as depression, self harm and suicide.Even though studies has identified significant relationship between cyber bullying and psychological distress but level of distress is not found among those who experienced cyber bullying and bullying at school.Although studies consistently identify a relationship between cyberbullying and psychological distress, it is not known whether reports of psychological distress are similar among cyberbullying and school bullying victims or what levels of distress are experienced by those who report being victimized both online and at school [24].

[25] concluded that bullying victimization is associated with increased level of psychological distress including depression, suicidal ideation, suicide attempts and self injury among youth. Relation between victimization and distress has been significantly reported among students who are cyber and school (both) victimized. Reports of depression among victims of both cyber and school bullying were 47.0 percent highest than cyber-victims which is only 33.9 percent and school-only victims have 26.6 percent compared with 13.6 percent of non victims. Similarly, suicide attempts were highest among victims of both cyber and school bullying (15.2%); as compare to cyber-only victims (9.4%) and school-only victims (4.2%) compared with students reported never victimized are 2.0 percent [26].

2. Objectives of the Study

This research was aimed;

To explore the relational aspects of bullying in form of peer victimization, psychological distress and self esteem among adolescence.

To Investigate gender differences in peer victimization, psychological distress and self esteem among adolescence

2.1. Hypothesis of the Study

Bullying in form of peer victimization will affect psychological distress, psychological wellbeing and self esteem among adolescence.

psychological distress, psychological wellbeing and self esteem will vary among victimized and bullies adolescence

Gender will vary in terms of peer victimization, psychological distress, psychological wellbeing and self esteem among adolescence

3. Method

3.1. Participants

Sample was consisted of 200 students (100 female 100 male); their age varies from 10-17 years from four institutes of Multan. They were similar with educational, economical, and cultural background.

3.2. Instruments

Four instruments were used in this study.

3.3. Peer victimization.

Peer victimization was measured through Bully Scale [27], only peer victimization subscale was used in this study. Scoring was done by point values, assigned to each response as: Never = 0, 1 or 2 times = 1, 3 or 4 times = 2, 5 or 6 times = 3, 7 or more times = 4. Three Subscales were scored by adding specific item responses on each scale. Bully subscale hasitems 1, 2, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18(score ranges from 0-36), Victim subscale has items 4, 5, 6, and 7 (score ranges from 0-16), Fighting subscale has items 3, 10, 11, 12, 13 (score ranges from 0-20).

3.4. Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10).

Psychological Distress Scale [28], is a screening instrument havingten items questionnaire which measure distress as global assessment of anxiety and depressive symptoms that person experienced within last 4 weeks duration. 10 responses are added up and the total scores areobtained on 5point likert scale, score range is 10 to 50. High score shows severity of distress.

3.5. State Self-Esteem Scale.

State Self-esteem Scale [29] was used in this research. This is a 20 item scale measures three components of self-esteem (Performance Self-esteem items: 1, 4, 5, 9, 14, 18, 19 Social Self-esteem items: 2, 8, 10, 13, 15, 17Appearance Self-esteem items: 3, 6, 7, 11, 12, 16.) on five point likert scale. Items 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15,

16, 17, 18, 19, 20 are reverse-scored. Sum of scores obtained by adding all responses to measure self esteem.

3.6. Psychological Well being Scale.

Psychological well being Scale (Gough, 1987) is 38 items scale form California psychological inventory which has True/ False format. There are 7 true items 6, 9, 10, 12, 19, 33, 37, andrests of items are false. Dichotomous scoring in the format of 0-1 response category was used 'true' responses were assigned score of '1' where as 'false' responses were score as '0' .High score on the scale represent high psychological wellbeing.

4. Procedures

Students of 10-17 ages were approached randomly in four institutes of Multan. They were informed about the purpose of study and were instructed how to fill the scales. Bully Scale, Psychological Distress Scale, State Self-esteem Scale and Psychological Well being Scale along with demographic sheet were administered. Before administration these scales were translated into Urdu and validated in the pilot study. Participants were given assurance that information would be confidential and only use for research analysis. Statistical Package for Social Sciences 20 version. Descriptive and inferential statistic was calculated.

Above table shows positive correlation of peer victimization with psychological distress, significant negative correlation with self esteem and psychological wellbeing. Psychological distress is significantly negative correlate with self esteem and psychological wellbeing, whereas self esteem is positively correlate with psychological wellbeing.

Below table-2 is indicating significant impact of Peer victimization on Psychological Distress, Self-esteem and Psychological Well being among adolescents.

Table1: Relationship of Peer victimization, Psychological Distress, Self-esteem and Psychological Well being

Scales	Peer victimization	Psychological Distress	Self-esteem	Psychological Well being
Peer victimization	1	.091	- .368**	-.206**
Psychological Distress		1	- .049	- .092
Self-esteem			1	.344**
Psychological Well being				1

Note: *N=200*

Table 2: Regression Analysis impact of Peer victimization *on* Psychological Distress, Self-esteem and Psychological Well being

Predictors	B	Std. Error	β	t	p
Constant	16.945	2.601		6.515	.000***
Psychological distress	-.085	.108	.052	-.783	.04*
Self Esteem	-.105	.019	-.380	-5.620	.000***
Psychological wellbeing	.040	.061	.044	.650	.04*

Note: ***N*** *= 200;* R^2 *= 0.140, Adjusted* R^2 *= 0.127, (F (3, 197) = 10.701, *p = 0.05), ***p< = 0.001, *p< = 0.05*

Table3: Means, Standard deviations and t-value of psychological distress, self-esteem and psychological wellbeing among peer victimized and bullies Adolescents

Scale	*Group*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
Psychological Distress	Victimized	120	16.7	2.5	3.89	0.003*
	Bullies	80	12.6	1.5		
Self-esteem	Victimized	120	10.6	4.3	.404	.40
	Bullies	80	9.9	4.2		
Psychological Well being	Victimized	120	9.4	4.1	.386	.30
	Bullies	80	8.9	4.0		

Note N*=200, df 198, *p<0.05, p(ns)*

Above table indicates the differences of peer victimized and bullies on the scales of self esteem, psychological distress and psychological wellbeing among adolescents. Significant differences are found only on the scores of psychological distress. There are no significant differences on thescale of self esteem and psychological wellbeing among victimized and bullies adolescents.

Above table shows the gender differenceson the scale of peer victimization,*p*sychological distress, self-esteem and psychological Well being among adolescents. Gender varies significantly on the scores of peer victimizations and psychological wellbeing whereas psychological distress and self esteem do not differ.

5. Discussions

Bullying is an important issue which has long lasting effects on an individual's wellbeing and emotional life. This research was aimed to determine the effects of peer victimization and bullying on psychological distress and self esteem among adolescence. it was hypothesized that bullying in form of peer victimization will affect psychological distress, psychological wellbeing and self esteem among adolescence.Table1 is indicating relationship of Peer victimized, Psychological Distress, Self-esteem and Psychological Well being. Peer victimization is positive correlate with psychological distress (r=.09), significant negative correlation with self esteem (-.368**) and psychological wellbeing (-.206**). Psychological distress is significantly negative correlate with self esteem (-.04) and psychological wellbeing (-.09), whereas self esteem is highly positive correlate with psychological wellbeing (.34**).

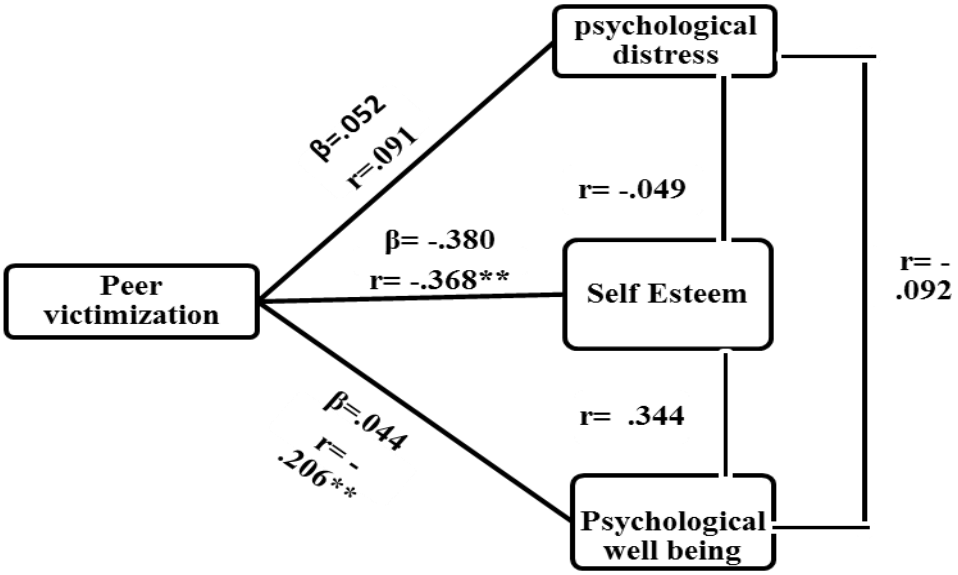
Table4: Means, Standard deviations and t-value of Peer victimization,Psychological Distress, Self-esteem and Psychological Well being

	Gender	N	M	SD	*t*	*p*
Peer victimization	Male	100	10.7	4.4	-1.621	.04*
	Female	100	9.7	4.7		
Psychological Distress	Male	100	18.1	2.7	-.847	.621
	Female	100	17.8	2.9		
Self-esteem	Male	100	58.6	17.0	.260	.840
	Female	100	59.2	16.6		

Psychological Well being	Male	100	29.1	6.2	-5.658	.01*
	Female	100	24.5	5.2		

N=200, df =198, *p< 0.05, p = (n.s)

Table2 indicates significant impact of Peer victimization *on* Psychological Distress, Self-esteem and Psychological Well being among adolescents.Statistics proved that peer victimization has negative effects on self esteem, psychological wellbeing and increases psychological distress among adolescents. These findings are similar to the previous findings; children who are bullied by their fellows have low self-esteem, emotional distress, and behavioral problems, criminal activities [30]. Another research concluded that bullying victimization is associated with increased level of psychological distress including depression, suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, low self esteem and self injury among youth [31]. This research suggested the following relational frame work;



Second hypothesis of this study was assumed that psychological distress, psychological wellbeing and self esteem will vary among victimized and bullies adolescence. Table3 indicates the differences among adolescents who are peer victimized and bullies on the scales of self esteem, psychological distress and psychological wellbeing. Significant differences are found only on the scores of psychological distress. Statistics indicates peer victimized are more psychological distress (mean=16.7, SD=2.5) as compare to bullies (mean=12.6, SD=1.5). No significant differences are found on the scale of self esteem and psychological wellbeing among victimized and bullies adolescents.Statistics indicates self esteem score of peer victimized (mean=10.6, SD=4.3) and bullies (mean=9.9, SD=4.2) has no differences. Statistics indicates psychological wellbeing has no differences among peer victimized (mean=9.4, SD=4.1) and bullies (mean=8.9, SD=4.0). It seems that bullies and peer victimized both has low self esteem and psychological wellbeing. Justification of these findings may rely on the meta-analysis of studies [32,33] explored that victimization and psychosocial maladjustment has a strongest association, in conclusion victims reported high levels of psychological distress than bullies. [34] suggest that victims have low levels of self-esteem than bullies high level of self-esteem), because sense of power and dominance is a reason to humiliate fellows. Therefore this tendency is not found in this research which may be cultural and social impact among adolescents.

This study hypothesized gender variations in terms of peer victimization, psychological distress, psychological wellbeing and self-esteem among adolescence.Table 4 shows the gender differenceson the scale of peer victimization,*p*sychological distress, self-esteem and psychological Well-being among adolescents. No gender differences are found on the scores of psychological distress and self esteem, male and female has similar level of distress and self esteem.Gender varies significantly on the scores of peer victimizations, male adolescents are more victimized (Mean=10.7, SD=4.4) as compare to female adolescents (Mean=9.7, SD=4.7). Gender differences are found on the scale of psychological wellbeing, male adolescents have high psychological wellbeing (Mean=29.1, SD=6.2) as compare to female adolescents (Mean=24.5, SD=5.2). These findings can be justified by Rigby, [35] research, which explored gender differences in psychological well-being across different countries, high psychological well-being among boys. Current findings of significant gender differences indicates boys' participation to bully others, is similar with the results of HBSC 2001/2002 research, concluded thatboys reported bullying others more than girls around the globe [36].

6. Conclusion

Results of this research suggest that being victimized by peers is significantly related to high levels of psychological distress, low self-esteem and psychological wellbeing. Peer victimization has significant affect on psychological distress, low self-esteem and psychological wellbeing. Findings indicate that distress is high among peer victims of bullying as compare of bullies.Significant gender differences were found in peer victimization and psychological wellbeing.

6.1. Implementations

This research suggests that bulling prevention trainings, workshops and seminars must be part of school education. Parental awareness of bullying attitudes and concern for wellbeing and self esteem are required for better up brings of children. Parents should be aware of bullying symptoms like; sudden poor grades, low interest at school, social withdrawal, sickness in morning time, unexplained cuts on body, money lost, less eating behavior and

bullying towards sibling or other children. Schools can successfully reduce bullying by establishing; clear rules against bullying, increasing adult supervision where bullying usually occurs such as in cafeterias, bathrooms, school backyards, hallways and stairwells.

6.2. Limitations & Suggestions.

Certain limitations should be taken into account to interpret the findings of this study. Peer victimization was measured by bullying scale (as subscale) it's a reliable scale but still there is need well design peer victimization inventory to determine more accurate findings. It may be researchers' limitation of time as the data was collected at the same time from few schools in Multan city. There is a need to qualitative method,observation method, interview methods and longitudinalmethod of data collection to get in-depth knowledge to enhance the external validity of the study. Nationwide study should be done to more reliable results. Future research should focus on other variables like parenting, environmental factors, school and bullying preventions methods.

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