



## The Practices of Bullying and Preventive Practices in Secondary Schools

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**Abstract:** *This study was aimed to measure the practices of bullying and preventive practices in secondary schools. The population of the study was comprised of all the headteachers and secondary level students of all the schools of Sargodha city. A sample of 200 students was randomly selected from 20 Boys' Public Secondary Schools. A self-developed questionnaire for students and a semi-structured interview for headteachers validated through expert opinion were administered personally in this study. The obtained data was analyzed and interpreted by using MS Excel. Major results were that most of the students think that bullying becomes the reason for poor grades of students; victims lose their self-esteem, confidence and get mentally and physically affected; the majority of Headteachers claimed that for any bullying incident, appropriate steps are taken according to the seriousness of the event like warning, punishment, calling parents and even expulsion. It is recommended that teachers, administrators and all staff members should be specifically trained for the anti-bullying campaign.*

**Key Words:** Bullying, Preventive Practices, Secondary Schools

### Introduction

Aggressive behaviour is shown by using force to upset other persons, especially it is part of the habits and include power imbalance of physical or social power is called Bullying. It consists of physical attack and verbal harassment towards a particular victim repeatedly. That particular victim which is the person being bullied is also called the target (Einarsen, 2000; Shetgiri, 2014). The basic types of bullying are three i.e. verbal, physical and emotional. Bullying consists of three basic types of abuse- emotional, verbal and physical. It normally consists of methods of oppression like intimidation. Bullying can be defined in many ways (McGrath, & Mary, 2007).

Bullying is conduct that is only understandable as soon as any person face it.

Bullying may happen to a person of any age and at any place e.g. at home, school or at the workplace even. [Hamburger Basile, Vivolo, \(2011\)](#) defined that bullying is for long time psychological or physical continuous violence, committed by any person or group conducted against any other person who is not able to defend himself or herself. In line with this [Damanjit, Manjot, Kirandeep, \(2015\)](#) described that bullying is recurring, adverse actions during a long time including threatening, teasing, kicking, hitting, locking in a room, saying unpleasant and nasty things. [Rigby, \(2011\)](#) stated that bullying is "The systematic abuse of power in interpersonal relationships". In the words, it can be said that power abuse is not delimited to only authority or managerial positions, but most persons find

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the opportunity to control any other person. Consequently, it is obvious that differences in psychological and physical strengths between the victim and the bully.

[Volk, Dane, & Marini, \(2014\)](#) explained bullying in a different way than when one or more individuals frequently and repeatedly do or say unpleasant and painful things to the person is not in possession to defend herself or himself. Further, about unpleasant and painful experiences, [Baldry \(2004\)](#) denoted these as indirect or direct bullying. In addition, he described that unpleasantness and pain may be owing to direct bullying encompassing insulting offensive, kicking, hitting, and scornful comments or intimidation due to indirect bullying, which is an equally painful experience being socially excluded and isolated from other members of the group. Moreover psychological component is usually present in all types of bullying ([Rigby, 2011](#)).

According to [Makafane \(2019\)](#), bullying in schools is a phenomenon that exists all over the world and can produce adverse effects for the overall school environment and for students' learning opportunities without any fear. Bullying is so bad that it can affect adversely for lifelong and surprisingly its effects on both who bullies and victims. In developed countries, formal intervention packages to stop bullying are being carried out for decades in formal schools. Bullying put a long-lasting effect not only on victims but also on the persons witnessing bullying, and also on the bullies. "Bullying is a type of abuse and it is a concealed type of action ([Weiss, 2013](#)). According to [Ferrara, Villani, Villani, & Corsello, \(2019\)](#) both traditional forms of abuse and bullying are destructive and selfish, often violent acts against the person who should not be treated in this way.

All type of bullying begins with small teasing the target person and then start labelling including one or many things like skin colour, race, physical disabilities, sexuality or religion; 35% of kids were directly involved in bullying incidents, 24% race-related bullying and 76% of boys and 85% of girls were experiencing sexual harassment

([Coloroso, 2002](#)).

It is agreed upon fact that all ages of children are bullied. It is also affected by many factors like demographic areas, socioeconomic status and ethnic background. It is necessary to have a deeper understanding of the bullying problem and to provide bullying education for probable solutions prevention and intervention for teachers, students and parents. Hence the study was opted to find out the practices of bullying and preventive practices in Secondary Schools.

### Objectives of the Study

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The purpose of this study was to find out the practices of bullying and preventive practices in Secondary Schools and also to comprehend the credentials of bullying, identify the role of a participant in bullying circumstances and steps taken by the school administration check bullying and take actions if bullying happened in school premises.

### Research Questions

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The following questions were to be answered:

1. Do students feel safe in the schools?
2. Were there students victims of bullying in schools?
3. Do students talk with each other about bullying problems?
4. What are the major reasons for bullying?
5. What are the harms of bullying?
6. What do students do to stop the bullying?
7. What precautionary and remedial measures schools are taking in order to reduce bullying in schools?

### Review of Literature

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Bullying and its consequences are known to us through media broadcasts. Now it is discussed widely that bullying adversely affects students' achievement in schools, psychological well-being and pro-social skills of both bullies and their victims ([Uba, Yaacob, Juhari & Talib,](#)

[2010](#)). Bullying affects academically, emotionally and physically the victim and also the bully as well. It is an act of bullying when a victim student faces harassment, teasing or physical assault by any other student or group of students frequently and over time. Bullies usually want to get power over the victim and dominate him ([Kowalski, & Limber, 2013](#)).

### Elements of Bullying

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According to [Cleary, Sullivan, & Sullivan, \(2004\)](#) bullying contains some of the following characteristics:

1. The bully student has extra power over the target student.
2. Bullying is hidden, regular & well-thought-out.
3. Bullies are often cunning and continue to bully frequently and over time.
4. Bullying can also be in isolation.
5. Bullying can be psychological, emotional and physical.
6. Bullying is an abuse of many types and it frequently occurs more in grades 2 to 6. Further, it keeps on increasing and converts more severe in grades 7 and further grades.

### Forms of Bullying

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Many researchers like [Bauman, & Rio, \(2015\)](#); [Marsh, \(2018\)](#) described three types of bullying:

1. Physical bullying includes pushing, spitting, kicking, hitting, stealing and destruction of property.
2. Verbal bullying involves name-calling, teasing, taunting, malicious and making threats.
3. Psychological bullying includes manipulating social relationships, exclusion from a peer group, spreading rumours, extortion and intimidation.

### Components of Bullying

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According to [Koo, \(2007\)](#), there are two key components of bullying are as follows:

1. Psychological or physical bullying occurs frequently over time and
2. Power imbalance.

It is to note that teasing fighting and taunting, are not counted in bullying when two students are at about the same level of psychological or physical strength. Bullies involve cruel conduct against weak students unable to defend themselves due to weak strength or size and less psychologically tough ([Jan, & Husain, 2015](#)).

### Facts about Bullying

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Different kinds of research revealed the fact that students of grades 6 – 10 involved in bullying are about 30% ([Harris & Willoughby, 2003](#); [Cohn & Canter, 2003](#)). More comprehensively [Ahmed, Hussain, Ahmed, Ahmed, & Tabassum, \(2012\)](#) found that the trend of bullying is an increase in bullying in elementary grades and go to peak level in middle schools; It decreases significantly in 11 – 12 grades. Moreover, at the elementary level physical bullying e.g. social exclusion, intimidation and teasing occur. In this regard, [Connell, Schell-Busey, & Hernandez, \(2018\)](#) concluded that boys are more involved in bullying rather than in physical bullying both as bullies and targets or victims whereas among girls bullying is often indirect in the form of social exclusion and teasing. Girls often bully girls while boys bully both girls and boys ([Rivara, & Menestrel, 2016](#)).

### Effects of Bullying

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Bullying effects are long-lasting and have consequences of emotional physical and academic disturbance on bullies, victims and also on witnesses. In schools, bullying has the same negative impacts on the learning environment without which that was safe and students were being treated with respect and affection. Victims of bullying feel lonely, remain absent from class and even drop out of school; they most of the time suffer a loss of self-esteem, humiliation, insecurity and greater risk of mental health problems and depression ([Shellard & Turner, 2004](#)). Victims

of bullying also have difficulties in emotional and social adjustments; moreover, they cannot make friends and have poor relationships with their class fellows ([Hamburger, Basile, & Vivolo, 2011](#)).

It can be concluded by the words of [Rivara, & Le Menestrel \(2016\)](#) that in today's classrooms, due to bullying students are in crisis, their classroom environment is disturbed, learning is given in and their social relationships are spoiled.

### **Non-physical or Psychological Bullying Behaviors**

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Non-physical or Verbal bullying generally includes giving threats to a student or group of students such as abusive telephone calls, calling their names, spreading rumours, teasing, and any other form of verbal coercion. Direct nonverbal bullying is to be rude to any other and give offensive gestures whereas indirect nonverbal bullying consists of purposely excluding others or isolating someone, influencing or tarnishing friendships etc. ([Rivara, Le Menestrel, 2016](#)).

### **Role of the Teacher**

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A teacher can play the role of listener and watchman of bullying behaviours of mischievous students. In schools, teachers are at the first place for creating awareness of harmful effects of bullying and tell the no-tolerance policy for bullying and work for peaceful relationships. But it is problem that students hardly ever tell the class teacher about bullying ([Vicki, 2015](#)). Teachers can respond to any bullying incident in many ways such as showing that he is watching and observing, intervening if necessary and sometimes ignoring the minute symptoms of bullying. Students should fear that teachers can readily interfere with the occurrence of bullying events ([DeLuca, Nocentini, & Menesini, 2019](#)).

### **Bullying Removal Practices in Schools**

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Bullying can be controlled in schools by strong

wish and readiness make coordinated efforts by all school personnel, administrators, parents, and students. Headteacher or Principal can play a lively role in the success of the preventive program of bullying in the school ([Harris, Petrie, & Willoughby \(2002\)](#)). In schools apparently, absence of administrative backing, the nonexistence of whole-school policy for bullying, the school environment cannot effectively deal with any bullying affairs ([Bradshaw, Sawyer & O'Brennan, 2007](#)).

### **Strategies for Developing a Bullying Prevention Program**

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An active prevention program of bullying should reorganize the learning atmosphere to produce an environment with helpful teachers participation, impressive role model, strong limits of steady sanctions for bullying behaviour ([Cohn and Canter, 2003](#)). In short, it can be concluded that in school there must be such an environment of intervention and bring the bullying situation to an end to convey the message that bullying will not be tolerated.

### **Research Design**

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The research was descriptive in nature and a survey was conducted for data collection. The population comprised all headteachers and all students of Boys Secondary schools of Sargodha city. A sample of students was selected through random sampling technique; twenty (20) Boys' secondary schools were selected (due to social taboos girls' schools were not taken) and 10 students and all headteachers of selected schools were the samples. So the sample comprised of 200 students, and 20 headteachers.

### **Instrument of the Study**

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A self-developed questionnaire for students and a semi-structured interview for headteachers were used in this study. The questionnaire was of twenty items on Yes and No format on the factors i.e. students safety, a victim of bullying, talking about bullying

problem, reason of bullying, effects of bullying, and stopping bullying whereas interview was about the prevention practices of bullying in schools. Both the instruments were discussed with five PhD Education experts and their suggestions were incorporated.

## Data Collection

The researcher visited the selected schools administered the questionnaire with the permission of the Headteacher of the schools

## Results

**Table 1.** Students' safety

S. No	Statement	No. of yes responses	Percentage	No. of no responses	Percentage
1.	Do you feel safe at school?	191	95.5%	9	4.5%
2.	Do you feel safe on your way and from home?	161	80.5%	39	19.5%
3.	Do you feel comfortable reporting bullying?	128	64%	72	36%
4.	If u saw someone being bullied, you will do something about it?	164	82%	36	18%
5.	Have you bullied another student in the past?	82	41%	118	59%
6	Do you see someone being bullied at your school?	181	90.5%	19	9.5%

Table 1 shows that 95.5% of students feel safe at school and only 4.5% of students do not feel safe at school. 80.5% of students feel safe on their way and from home while 19.5% of students do not feel safe. 64% of students feel comfortable reporting bullying while 36% of students do not feel comfortable reporting bullying. 82% of students think that if they will saw someone being bullied, they will do

and an interview of a head teacher was conducted at the end. Respondents were assured that their responses would be kept secret and nothing would be used only and only for research purposes.

## Analysis of Data

The quantitative data were analyzed using frequency and percentages and mean, whereas interview responses were analyzed through thematic analysis.

something about it. While 18% of students think that they will not do anything. 41% of students said that they have bullied someone in the past. While 59% said that they have not bullied another student in the past. 90.5% of students acclaimed that they saw someone being bullied at their schools and 9.5% of students said that they did not see someone being bullied at their school.

**Table 2.** Victim of Bullying

S. No	Statement	No. of yes responses	Percentage	No. of no responses	Percentage
8.	Were you bullied in the past few months at school?	57	28.5%	143	71.5%
9.	You were verbally bullied?	82	41%	118	59%
10.	You were physically bullied?	39	19.5%	161	80.5%

Table 2 shows that 28.5% of students said that they are being bullied at school in the past few months. 71.5% of students are not being bullied at schools in the past few months. 41% of students said that they were verbally bullied

and 59% of students were not verbally bullied. 19.5% of students were physically bullied. While 80.5% of students said that they were not physically bullied.

**Table 3.** Talking about Bullying Problem

S. No	Statement	No. of yes responses	Percentage	No. of no responses	Percentage
6.	Do you talk to your friends when you have a problem with bullying at school?	179	89.5%	21	10.5%
7.	Do you talk to your teacher when you have a bullying problem at school?	167	83.5%	33	16.5%

Table 3 shows that 89.5% of students claim that they use to talk with their friends whenever they had bullying problems at school while 10.5% of students do not talk to their friends when they are having any

problem in school. 83.5% of students said that they talk to their teachers when they are facing any sort of bullying problem at their school and 16.5% of students do not talk to their teachers about bullying.

**Table 4.** Reason of Bullying

S. No	Statement	No. of yes responses	Percentage	No. of no responses	Percentage
11.	You were bullied because of your physical disability?	18	9%	182	91%
12.	You were bullied because of your weakness?	35	17.5%	165	82.5%
13.	You were bullied because of your appearance?	24	12%	176	88%

Table 4 shows that 9% of students said that they were bullied because of their physical disability. 91% of students were not bullied because of their physical disability.17.5% of students said that they were bullied because of

their weakness but 82.5% were not bullied because of their weakness.12% of students were bullied because of their appearance while 88% of students were not bullied.

**Table 5.** Effects of Bullying

S. No	Statement	No. of yes responses	Percentage	No. of no responses	Percentage
15.	Do you think bullying activity becomes a reason for poor grades?	191	95.5%	9	4.5%
16.	Students who are being bullied, feel depression & low self-esteem?	185	92.5%	15	7.5%
17.	Bullying affects a student mentally as well as physically?	169	84.5%	31	15.5%

Table 5 shows that 95.5% of students think that bullying activity becomes the reason for poor grades for students and only 4.5% of students think that bullying activity does not affect on grades of students. 92.5% of students think that students feel depressed and have

low self-esteem because of being bullied while 7.5% of students do not think so. 84.5% of students are agreeing that bullying affects a student mentally and also physically while 15.5% of students do not think the same.

**Table 6.** Stopping Bullying

S. NO	Statement	No. of yes responses	Percentage	No. of no responses	Percentage
18.	Can students and peer groups take a stand against bullying to stop it?	168	84%	32	16%
19.	Do you think schools are responsible for this	51	25.5%	149	74.5%

S. NO	Statement	No. of yes responses	Percentage	No. of no responses	Percentage
20.	kind of act? Can teachers & school administration help the student who was the victim of bullying?	191	95.5%	9	4.5%

Table 6 shows that 84% of students think that students and peer groups can take against bullying activity to stop it while 16% of students think that peer groups cannot take a stand against this kind of activity. 25.5% of students think that schools are responsible for bullying activity among students and 74.5% of students do not think that schools are responsible for this kind of act. 95.5% of students think that teachers and school administration can help the student regarding this type of action but only 4.5% of students think that teachers and school administration cannot help the student.

### Results of Head Teachers' Interview

On the basis of the head teachers' interview following findings were recorded.

### Disciplinary Actions against Conduct of Bullying

- a. Head Teachers is responsible to deal with bullying according to the situation. All the head Teachers stated that in case of any mishappening appropriate steps are taken according to the situation and seriousness of the event. All of them pinpointed the following.
- b. In case of minor problems, a warning is issued. While counselling by the teacher-in-charge class is arranged to make the students aware of the situation.
- c. A discipline committee comprising of two senior teachers and PET of school decides about the major causes of bullying students. The punishment may be calling parents and most serious cases expulsions from the school.
- a. When the question asked about the group counselling program for bullying students, the answer of almost all the headteachers was as under: Students

are given orientation at the time of fresh admission and at the beginning of the new educational year about rules and regulations of school and conduct of students.

- b. All the rules and regulations are explained in the class by the teacher in charge. Many headteachers stated that they have written all the rules and regulations with paint on a wall after the entry point of the schools.
- d. The Proctor system is now changed into Character building club under the supervision of a senior teacher for keeping watch on students' activities.
- e. When asked about any social skill training program, especially for the students involved in indiscipline or bullying who accept co-curricular activities, all the headteachers replied negatively.

### Precautionary and Remedial Measures

The majority of the headteachers were taking the following measures in their schools as preventive measures of bullying.

- i. Checking any kind of bullying at school is important. Headteachers of Secondary Schools explained the School policy in response to interview questions as under:
- ii. The majority of Headteachers claimed that they explain rules and regulations during orientation classes of fresh admissions and students and their parents are bound to sign an undertaking that they will not breach discipline during their study.
- iii. Proper check on student's activities by deputing a day master mostly Physical Education Teacher (PET) who move about different locations to avoid any kind of misbehave or indiscipline.

- iv. The Head teacher himself or any of the senior teachers frequently visit to keep watch on students' activities to keep the discipline disciplined.
  - v. In classes teachers in charge and monitor, the class are responsible for keeping discipline and avoiding any misbehaviour of the students.
  - vi. One headteacher claimed that He with the help of a Physical Education Teacher had made the system of Proctors selecting students from all the classes to keep watch on the students in the morning when students come to school, during recess and at the time of school closing.
  - vii. Moreover, literary functions, sports and other such activities are arranged to provide students with opportunities to reflect on their faculties, feelings and to keep them busy in healthy practices.
- iii. Majority of the students think that bullying cause poor grades, feel depression, low self-esteem and get mentally and physically disturbed. Similar results were found by [Devries, Child, Allen, Walakira, Parkes, Naker, \(2014\)](#); [UNESCO \(2017\)](#) and [Mbah, \(2020\)](#) revealed that due to bullying academic performance, school attendance and mental health are affected.
  - iv. Majority of the students acts against any bullying activity, and they think that teachers and school administration can help a student on being bullied. Some more researchers like [Al-Ali, & Shattnawi, \(2018\)](#) and [Alsalem, Alhashem Alsalem, & Mahfouz, \(2021\)](#) found that after being bullied or seeing bullying students report to teachers.
  - v. Majority of Headteachers claimed that they explain rules and regulations to students of fresh admissions and their parents, depute day master mostly Physical Education Teacher (PET), visit the school frequently, made system of student Proctors to keep watch on the students. Moreover, co-curricular activities are arranged to keep the students mentally and physically busy.
  - vi. Majority of Headteachers claimed that in case of any bullying incident, appropriate steps are taken according to the situation and seriousness of the event like warning, punishment, calling parents and even expulsion from school. [Alsalem, Alhashem, Alsalem, & Mahfouz \(2021\)](#) described that teachers should make it clear to students that bullying would not be tolerated.
  - vii. Majority of Headteachers described that they made writings of school rules and regulations with paint on a wall after entry point of the schools and proctor system is now changed into Character

## **Conclusions and Discussion**

On the basis of data analyses following conclusions are made.

- i. Majority of students feel safe at school and on their way and to from home, feel comfortable about reporting bullying to teachers as the majority of the students talk to their friends and teachers about being bullied. The majority of students help other students with being bullied. Moreover, the majority of the students was not bullied but few were verbally bullied and few were physically bullied. Many types of research revealed similar results such as [Mbah, \(2020\)](#); [Ahmed, Hussain, Ahmed, Ahmed, Tabassum \(2012\)](#) found that bullying exists in most schools. [Marsh, \(2018\)](#) stated that friends and fellows help the students being bullied. [Ahmed, Hussain, Ahmed Ahmed, Tabassum, \(2012\)](#) and [Alsalem, Alhashem, Alsalem, & Mahfouz, \(2021\)](#) found that in most schools verbal bullying takes place.
- ii. Majority of the students are not bullied because of their physical disability,

building club under the supervision of a senior teacher but no social skill training program was arranged. [Johnson, \(2011\)](#) suggested that a school-wide bullying prevention program should be implemented and group or individual and/or counselling should be conducted as a precautionary measure.

## Recommendations

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Following recommendations are offered for further research and Investigation:

1. It is recommended that schools should keep up a dynamic and continuous anti-bullying operation that arrange for attentiveness and teachings for all the communities including staff members, teachers, students, administrators, parents and community members.
2. Teachers, administrators and all staff members should be specifically trained for the anti-bullying campaign about operational strategies to fight bullying behaviours.
3. A strong parents-teachers association is suggested to keep parents informed about the anti-bullying policy that provides guidance to create a safe and positive environment to foster pro-social behaviour.
4. Teachers should have an open channel with students. Then students will feel stress-free to talk with their teachers about bullying and also about other problems.

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