

## **Bullying Behavior in Rural Area Schools of Gujrat, Pakistan: Prevalence and Gender Differences**

Namra Shahzadi

Bushra Akram

Department of Psychology  
University of Gujrat (UOG) – Pakistan

Saima Dawood

Center for Clinical Psychology University of Punjab

Bushra Bibi

Department of Psychology  
University of Gujrat (UOG) – Pakistan

The study's objective was to investigate the incidence of bullying among rural schools of Gujrat. 400 students were chosen by stratified random sampling from government and private schools in Kot Ameer Husain and Ikhlas Ghar, Gujrat. Translated version of Illinois Bullying Scale (Shujja & Atta, 2011) was used and frequency program was run in order to calculate the percentages of the scores. Results indicated that maximum sample fall in the moderate category of victim level (42.6%), fight level (43.2%) and (50.5%) of bullying level. Independent sample *t*-test revealed that boys show significantly higher level of bullying than girls. Percentages of the bullying were same in both public and private schools. These findings will be helpful for creating awareness about students' mental health and policy making for preventive measures of bullying in schools.

*Keywords: bullying, students, rural areas, Gujrat,*

Bullying in schools has been an alarming issue for a long time. Most adults have some understanding of the issue, having experienced it as children themselves, or through observing their own and others' children. In young students in schools, bullying arises as a violent problem that continues to seek attention from scientists, teachers, parents and students. The systematic examination of the nature and occurrence of bullying in classrooms began with the work by Olweus in the 1970s in Scandinavia (Rigby, 2011). From that stage, study on bullying has spread from Scandinavia to nations around the globe, such as Australia (Rigby & Slee, 1993), Finland (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1996), Greece (Andreou, 2004), Japan (Kanetsuna, Smith, & Morita, 2006), Pakistan (Shujja & Atta, 2011), Singapore (Kwan & Skoric, 2013) and Sweden (Nilsson, Gustafsson, & Svedin, 2012).

Until now, studies have put forward that bullying may occur in any school, but the degree of severity varies (Smith & Brain, 2000; Veenstra et al., 2005). Bullying behavior originates from a need of domination on others by using power. Power is unequally distributed between bullies and victims (Ttofi, David & Baldry, 2008).

Bullying is considered to be a subcategory of aggressive behavior (Koo, 2007) that was later defined as behavior that causes harm to others and usually results in individual ruin of goods. According to

Olewus (1996), bullying is a type of aggressive behavior in which the power is unequally distributed; habitually one individual uses forceful behavior to affect another particular individual. Bullying is an intentional, repetitive forceful act, statement or behavior performed by one individual against another individual.

Bullying is the type of private violence that children face in classrooms, and strategies for classroom intervention have shown restricted success in decreasing such behaviors. World-wide bullies are reported to be destructive and keen to start fights; victims are shy, likely to seek help and have few friends (Eslea et al., 2004). Types of bullying differ the way it happens. There are four prevalent types of bullying, namely verbal, physical, cyber and relational bullying (Brank, Hoetger & Hazen, 2012).

School going students are the most important asset for country because they are the backbone of any nation. Children's education is very important for them and for any nation and any society. Violence, aggression and bullying is becoming common and expanding phenomena in school going children, which has attracted the interest of scientists and educators (Turiel, 1983).

Recently, school bullying got more focused by the researchers. Before this, school bullying was ignored as other contexts of bullying were being more widely studied. Bullying becomes a typical and daily action plan among kids under college during school era (Moon, Hwang & McLuskey, 2008). According to Sampson (2002), most often bullying occurs in primary school and marginally lesser in elementary school and then frequent bullying again, in the secondary school.

As reported by the National School Association of School Psychologists (2012), over 20 percent of children globally continue to be at danger of involvement in any type of bullying conduct. Atta and Shujja (2014) observed bullying prevalence to be between 19.6

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr. Bushra Akram, Department of Psychology, University of Gujrat, Gujrat. Email: bushra.akram@uog.edu.pk

percent - 24.1 percent among sixth grader students. A percentage of students engaged in the most severe types of bullying issues has been increased by 65 percent (Martinez-Criado, 2015). Bullying occurrence in ages between 7 to 8 years and 11 to 14 years is at its peak level in school and public school children experience more bullying than private schools (Cowie & Myers, 2015; Wang et al., 2016). In the bully position, it is discovered that boys are more in numbers than girls (Barlett and Coyne, 2014; Nansel et al, 2016).

Abdulsalam, Al-Daihani and Francis (2017) stated bullying as a worldwide problem with damaging effects upon students. They conducted a research to check out the prevalence and forms of bullying in elementary school students in Kuwait. Study results indicated that bullying incidence was 30.2 percent (18.9 percent victims, 3.5 percent bullies, and 7.8 percent bully victims).

The scientific writings provide evidences on gender differences in bullying behavior and studies emphasize issues of gender in analyses of school bullying. Alsaleh (2014) examined bullying in Kuwaiti schools with regard to gender differences, comparing peer bullying levels among male and female students. Results showed that boys were more involved in direct bullying than girls while the latter scored more on indirect bullying. Athanasiades and Kouimtzis (2010) conducted a study to find out the interpretation and experience of bullying in secondary school students of Greece with reference to gender similarities and differences. Interpretative phenomenological approach for the interpretation of data showed that different meaning and interpretation of bullying across gender and grades greatly influence the actual behavior. Results also indicated that bullying is reported more in boys than girls and the school environment plays important in engagement of students in bullying behavior.

Studies showed that there were multiple forms of bullying: physically bullying (hitting, kicking and punching), verbal bullying (ridiculing, asserting, intimidating), social bullying (leaving group, snubbing others), erotic bullying (sexual comments or gestures), and cyberbullying (sending frustrating and irritating automated messages from the phones and computers) (Suckling & Temple, 2002). Mahmood and Islam (2017) reported that bullying can occur anywhere at school among children like in classroom, playground, buses, bathrooms and cafeteria. Bullying behavior is adopted by children to seek attention.

In Pakistan, bullying is a major issue, and with fresh traditions of bullying others, it is increasing rapidly. Shujja and Atta (2014) have specifically studied the prevalence of bullying, victimization, and fighting conduct among school students in the context of graduates, school types, and gender in Pakistan. Results indicated that sixth grade students of both public and private schools were on high risk of bullying. Boys were reported to be more engaged in bullying. Jan and Hussain (2015) performed a survey to define the causes and impacts of primary school bullying behaviour. Results stated that aggression, power, jealousy, and the search for vengeance were causes of bullying.

Ahmer et al., (2008) found in a study on the incidence of student bullying behavior that much of Pakistan's medical learners experienced harassment, and most of the bullying culprits were advisors. Mukhtar et al., (2010) conducted a research to explore frequency, forms and factors of bullying among medical students. Study findings showed that 66 percent of medical students experience bullying of various types and bullying factors recognized by the research were verbal abuse, behavioural gestures, absence of social assistance and solitude.

The growing knowledge that bullying in college has severe consequences for students and society is something that needs to be taken seriously in the interests of future generations. This study seeks to provide prevalence of bullying in the rural area schools of Gujrat that can be used to handle bully behavior among rural area school children. The results of this study can be used as a recommendation for school administrators, school psychologist, counselors and other schools related and government officials to develop and implement comprehensive anti-bullying policy.

### Objective of the Study

- To study the bullying behavior among rural area school students of Gujrat.
- To investigate the gender differences in the level of bullying.
- To find out the difference in the prevalence of bullying among public and private schools.

### Hypotheses

- Boys will exhibit more bullying behaviors as compared to the girls.
- Public school's students will experience more bullying behavior as compared to the private schools.

### Method

A cross sectional study was conducted in the rural areas of Gujrat District to explore the prevalence of bullying behavior among school children.

### Sample

Sample of this research comprised of 400 students from Gujrat's rural areas government and private schools. Stratified random sampling was used to select 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students from five public and private schools of Kot Ameer Husain and Ikhlas ghar of Gujrat district. By using stratified sampling, a sample list of 215 students from Kot Ameer Husain and 219 Ikhlas Ghar school was divided into strata comprising of grades, then strata divided into sub-strata of male (200) and female (200) students. The remaining students were dropped from the sample.

### Instrument

**Illinois Bullying Scale (Urdu version).** The Urdu version of The Illinois Bullying Scale (Espelage, 2001) by Shujja and Atta, (2011) was used to define the incidence of bullying behavior among school children. It comprises of 18 items separated into 3 subscales, namely bully (9 items) Sample item "I upset other students for the fun of it", victim (4 items) sample item: "Students made fun of me" and combat/fight (5 items) sample item: "Hit back when someone hit me first." It is valid for 8-18 years of age. Cronbach Alpha ( $\alpha = .87$ ) (see Table 2) showed that IBS (Urdu version) is reliable tool for research. The levels of bullying, victimization and fight are indicated by ratings, i.e. ,1 to 2 times is mild, 3 to 4 times is moderate, 5 to 6 times is moderate to severe and 7 or more times is severe.

## Procedure

In order to administer the Illinois Bullying Scale on a selected sample, permission was first taken from school values after clearly discussing the unpleasant effect of bullying, victimization, and fighting on children's mental health, academic achievement, and school atmosphere. Then willingness of the students was ensured for participation in survey by using informed consent. Children have been assured that the data they had provided would be kept extremely confidential and used for study purposes only. Illinois Bullying Scale (Urdu version) was administered in conjunction with demographic form. Instructions were clearly defined to the participants orally and in written form as well for completing their questionnaires.

## Results

Reliability analysis, percentages and *t*-test were run on SPSS 21 version to test the results of study.

Table 1  
*Frequency and Percentage of the Demographic Variables (N = 400)*

Variable	F	%
Gender		
Male	200	50
Female	200	50
Class		
9 <sup>th</sup>	170	42.5
10 <sup>th</sup>	230	57.5
Schools		
Govt. girls	100	25
Private girls	100	25
Govt. boys	100	25
Private boys	100	25

Table 1 indicates the percentage and frequencies of demographic variables including the gender, class and schools. The sample

Table 4  
*Percentages of the Responses of ILBS (Shujja & Atta 2011) (Items=18)*

Variable	Never %	1 or 2 times %	3 or 4 times %	5 or 6 times %	7 or more times %
Upset other students for fun of it	37.7	28.5	4.6	1.3	8
In a group I, teased other student	48.7	27.5	6	2.1	5.7
Fought students I could easily beat.	51.8	10.7	2.9	1.6	3
Other students picked on me	42.2	27.3	10.2	3.9	6.4
Students made fun of me.	47.6	30.5	8.3	9.7	18.9
Students called name of me	46.5	28.8	8.4	3.4	12.9
Got hit and pushed by other students.	34.1	13	4.7	2.1	6
Helped harass other students.	28.8	18.6	5.9	2.4	4.3
Teased other students	24.1	35.6	9.3	2.7	8.3
Threatened to hurt or hit another student	27.5	13	3.9	1.9	3.7
Got into physical fight because I was angry	28.1	18.2	4.3	2.1	7.2
Hit back when someone hit me first.	33.5	33.9	11.2	3.4	8.0
Spread rumors about students.	80.8	11.9	3	2.3	2
Started (instigated) arguments or conflicts.	76.4	14.6	3.6	2	3.4
Encouraged people to fight	64.8	20.7	6.2	2	3.4
I excluded other students from my circle of friend	78.5	15.3	2.9	2	1.3

consisted of 400 school boys and girls equally divided for gender. Table also indicates that (42.5 %) of the students were from grade 9<sup>th</sup> and (57.5%) of grade 10<sup>th</sup>. Students consist of (25%) of girls govt. school, (25%) girls private school, (25%) boys govt. school and (25%) boys of private school.

## Reliability Analysis of ILBS

Table 2  
*Reliability of Illinois Bullying Scale (Urdu Version)*

Scale	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
IBS	18	.87

Table 2 indicates the reliability analysis of 18 items Illinois Bullying Scale (Urdu version) for the current study. The Cronbach's alpha (.87) shows that the scale is reliable and valid to be used in the research.

## Prevalence of Bullying Behavior

Table 3  
*Percentage of Different Levels of Bullying Behaviors (N=400)*

Variable	Mild %	Moderate %	Moderate to severe %	Severe %
Victim level	16	42.6	8	3.6
Fight Level	12.5	43.2	4.3	1.6
Bullying Level	20.5	50.5	8.4	3

Table 3 indicates that the levels of the victims, fight and bullying among students in last 30 days. Maximum sample fell in moderate category of victims (42.6%), fight (43.2%) and bullies (50.5%). Results indicated mild levels of victims (16%), fight (12.5%) and bullying (20.5%) levels. Lowest sample fell in severe category, victims (3.6%), fight (1.6%) and bullying (3%).

Table 4 results indicates the percentages of the participant's responses on ILBS (Atta & Shujja, 2011) in last 30 days. The maximum responses of the participants were "never" on each item of the Illinois Bullying Scale (Atta & Shujja, 2011). Results of the table also show that statement that got highest "never" (80.8%) points were "Spread rumors about students". The statement that got maximum response on the "two or three times" (35.6%) was "I

teased other students". Maximum response of "Three or four times" was (11.2%) on statement "Hit back when someone hit me first". Highest rating of "five or six times" (9.7%) was for the statement "Students made fun of me.". A maximum percentage of responses for the rating "Seven or more times" was for the same statement.

Table 5

*Gender Differences on Bullying Behaviors (N=400)*

Scale		Gender					
		Boys ( <i>N</i> =200)		Girls ( <i>N</i> =200)		<i>t</i>	Cohen's d
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
IBS	Victim	4.59	4.20	2.40	2.64	7.30***	0.62
	Bullying	7.08	6.73	3.98	4.10	8.18***	0.59
	Fight	4.79	4.64	1.92	2.25	10.32***	0.79
	Total	16.44	12.40	8.31	6.92	10.65***	0.80

Note. "Small, *d* = 0.2," "medium, *d* = 0.5," and "large, *d* = 0.8" *p* < .001

Table 6

*Group Differences on Bullying Behaviors in Public and Private Schools Children (N=400)*

Scale		<u>Schools</u>					
		<u>Public (N=200)</u>		<u>Private (N=200)</u>		<i>t</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
IBS	Victim	3.55	3.8	3.48	3.56	0.24	0.01
	Bullying	5.69	5.5	5.41	6.08	0.62	0.04
	Fight	3.71	4.2	3.04	3.61	2.24*	0.29
	Total	12.94	11.94	11.15	10.57	1.22	0.15

Note. "Small, *d* = .2," "medium, *d* = .5," and "large, *d* = .8" *p* < .001

Table 5 shows the findings of independent sample *t*-test to compare two groups such as boys and girls with victim, bullying and fighting behavior. The results indicate that there is significant difference in total score of ILBS (Shujja & Atta, 2011) between genders. Boys showed significantly higher scores on victim, bullying and fighting behavior than girls. Cohen's *d* value shows that all significant differences are large.

Table 6 shows the findings of independent sample *t*-test analysis to compare two school group such as public and private with victim, bullying and fighting behavior. The findings indicate that there is no important distinction between government and private school students on complete ILBS score (Shujja & Atta, 2011). But Fight level is reported higher in public schools than private school. Cohen's *d* value shows that there was only small difference in fight level.

### Discussion

Bullying can occur anywhere at school, college or workplace to anyone at any age. Bullying is also characterized as an aggressive conduct involving the following three features: intent to damage, repetition of conduct over time and power imbalance (Rigby, 2012). Bullying has become an alarming issue in all over the world and every country is trying to implement anti bullying policies so that future children can be protected.

In Pakistan, many studies are conducted to point out the issue of bullying and its consequences. Current research was carried out to investigate the incidence of bullying in Gujrat rural regions. The first goal of the study was to determine the incidence of bullying conduct among students at school. The prevalence was found in

terms of frequency and intensity of problem. The scores described in five categories "mild", "moderate", "moderate to severe" and "severe". Results of the study revealed maximum sample fall in moderate category, victims (42.6%), fight (43.2%) and who bullies (50.5%).

Different studies across the world were consistent with the results of current study. Panayiotis, Anna, Charalambos and Chrysostomos (2010) reveal that kids were engaged in moderate-level Bullying behavior in which 5.4 percent of children were bullies, 7.4 percent were perpetrators, and both 4.2 percent were bullies / victims. In the current study, mild and moderate level of bully was reported to be as vulnerable level as it could lead towards moderate to severe or severe level. A serious attention is required for the prevention and intervention of mild, moderate or mild to moderate level students. Results also indicated that lowest sample fall in severe category, large sample reporting moderate bullying and some cases in severe category of bullying which required proper assessment and management. The findings indicated that school administration, teachers and parents should pay attention towards the prevention of bullying so that students can learn and change their behavior for a healthy and bullying free environment. Nansel et al., (2001) found that 29.9 percent of the sample of young adults in US reported moderate or frequent involvement in bullying, as a bully (13.0%), victim (10.6%), or both (6.3%) Owuamanam & Makinwa (2015). found the experience of mild level bullying among 28 percent of secondary school students in Nigeria.

Results of our study revealed that boys showed more bullying than girls. It was also consistent with studies of different researchers across the world revealed that prevalence of bullying in boys was more than girls (Nansel et al., 2001, Shujja & Atta, 2014; Turkmen, 2013). In Pakistani culture, boys are always promoted and

appreciated on their bully behavior especially, in rural areas and they are considered as strong and macho man.

Second hypothesis of the current research stated students of public school's experience more bullying than of private school students. The research findings showed that there was no important distinction in the level of bullying in both government and private schools in Gujrat rural regions. As earlier research has reported that the classroom atmosphere had a significant effect on the perception of bullying and bullying attitude (Hanif, 2008), further research can be carried out in this direction.

### Future Recommendations

Identifying the incidence of bullying with regard to school types and gender in Gujrat's rural regions is a pioneering job and results from the present research can be useful to teachers, parents, school counselors and administration in perceiving bullying as a severe risk to children's physical and mental health. These results would provide profound insight into the occurrence of bullying and its adverse impact on the academic setting, academic performance, psychological and physical health of schools. These findings demonstrate the dire need for intervention programs to eradicate bullying behaviors in Pakistani schools. This study provides researchers with the recent ways of using multi-method approach by applying intervention strategies to investigate and address bullying behavior. This research would help counselors, teachers and parents to take the preventive measure for children who involved in bullying and bullying related behavior.

### Limitations

This research included a restricted sample of 13-18 years of age and results from the present research should not be generalized beyond the age group and to metropolitan regions. Furthermore, samples were drawn from different public and private schools, but this study did not include children of a given age who were not attending school. The data were not taken from parents and teacher, if they were involved in this study the clear picture would have appeared. Research was done only in the rural range of Gujrat district. It may be extended to other areas of Pakistan as well.

### Conclusion

It is discovered that in the light of current outcomes, the incidence of bullying, victimization, and fighting conduct among school pupils is a critical issue. In addition, it is discovered that boys were more victim and battle level participants than girls and also for bullying occurrence. Percentages of bullying behavior found same in both public and private schools of Gujrat. Findings of the study are helpful for school administration, teachers, school counselors and parents creating awareness about children mental health and making policies and intervention strategies for the prevention of bullying at school.

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Received: 18<sup>th</sup> Jan, 2019

Revisions Received: 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2019