

In-Depth Understanding of Bullying in Schools: A Systematic Literature

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Abstract: Bullying in schools is a pervasive issue with profound implications for students' academic performance and psychological well-being. This systematic literature review explores the complex dynamics of bullying, focusing on its contributing factors, impacts on academic outcomes, and preventive strategies. The review synthesizes findings from peer-reviewed studies published between [insert start date] and [insert end date], identified through searches in major academic databases including PubMed, PsycINFO, ERIC, and Google Scholar. Key themes include the role of individual traits, social dynamics, and environmental factors in shaping bullying behaviors. Factors such as peer pressure, family relationships, and school climate significantly influence the occurrence and severity of bullying incidents. The review highlights the detrimental effects of bullying on academic achievement, including reduced motivation, decreased concentration, and heightened psychological distress among victims. Effective prevention strategies discussed encompass proactive measures such as implementing anti-bullying policies, promoting positive peer relationships, and fostering empathy among students. School counselors and educators play pivotal roles in creating safe and inclusive environments through targeted interventions and support for victims. Challenges identified include variations in study methodologies and the need for culturally diverse perspectives in bullying research. Future research directions should prioritize investigating bullying across different cultural contexts and addressing emerging forms such as cyberbullying comprehensively. By advancing our understanding and implementing evidence-based interventions, we can work towards fostering inclusive school environments where all students feel safe, respected, and able to achieve their full academic potential.

Keywords: bullying, schools, academic performance, psychological impacts, preventive strategies, peer relationships, school climate, systematic review

Introduction

Bullying in educational settings remains a prevalent issue that has garnered extensive scholarly attention due to its profound negative effects on student's academic performance and overall well-being. Research consistently demonstrates that both individual experiences of bullying and the broader school climate significantly impair academic achievement. (Obregón-Cuesta et al., 2022) Victims of bullying often contend with diminished self-esteem, anxiety, and academic struggles, sometimes even resulting in severe outcomes like suicide (Bachi, 2021) Factors contributing to children becoming involved in bullying include externalizing behaviors, social competence challenges, negative attitudes, and inadequate parental oversight (Ttofi & Farrington, 2012) The emotional toll of bullying, whether in traditional school settings or online, frequently leads to anger, psychological distress, and social exclusion among students (Esquivel et al., 2023). Primary school educators, particularly guidance counselors, play a critical role in identifying, preventing, and mitigating bullying, underscoring the significance of their conduct and qualities in addressing this issue (Aalst, 2024) Protective

factors such as prosocial behavior and psychological resilience can mitigate the repercussions of bullying perpetration and victimization (Hemphill et al., 2013). Studies reveal that bullying adversely impacts various facets of academic performance, with students experiencing decreased proficiency in subjects like reading and mathematics when exposed to peer aggression (Murillo & Román, 2011). Victims of bullying often grapple with social maladjustment, school avoidance, and diminished learning achievements due to difficulties concentrating on their studies (Afriliani et al., 2020). Nonetheless, academic resilience can aid students in coping with the consequences of bullying and maintaining their educational performance (Widiharto et al., 2022). Initiatives aimed at reducing school bullying emphasize the importance of parental involvement, teacher vigilance, and institutional policies against peer intimidation (Farrington & Ttofi, 2009). The impact of bullying on students may manifest as frequent absences, declining academic performance, low self-esteem, and depression (Saifullah, 2022). Anti-bullying interventions frequently concentrate on cultivating a supportive school environment, nurturing positive student-teacher relationships, and addressing factors that precipitate bullying behaviors (Huang & Vidourek, 2019). In conclusion, bullying in schools constitutes a multifaceted problem with far-reaching consequences for students' academic success and mental health. Understanding the factors contributing to bullying, implementing effective prevention strategies, and providing support for both victims and perpetrators are essential steps in fostering secure and inclusive learning environments.

Method

This systematic literature review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of bullying in school settings, with a focus on its causes, impacts on academic performance, and preventive strategies. To gather relevant studies, searches were conducted in major academic databases including PubMed, PsycINFO, ERIC, and Google Scholar. Keywords such as "bullying," "school bullying," "cyberbullying," "academic performance," "psychological impact," "preventive strategies," "school climate," and "peer relationships" were used in combination with Boolean operators (AND, OR) to effectively narrow down the search results.

Inclusion criteria for studies encompassed publications between specified start and end dates, written in English, and including primary research studies, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses focused on bullying in educational settings. Articles that did not meet these criteria or were not directly related to bullying in school environments were excluded.

During the screening process, titles and abstracts of identified articles were screened to ensure relevance to the review's objectives. Full-text articles meeting the inclusion criteria were then retrieved and further assessed for their methodological quality using established criteria appropriate to their study design, such as the Newcastle-Ottawa Scale for observational studies. This assessment included evaluating studies for bias, sample representativeness, and methodological rigor.

Data extraction focused on key elements including study objectives, methodologies employed, participant demographics, and main findings related to factors contributing to bullying, its impacts on academic outcomes, and the effectiveness of preventive strategies. Findings from the included studies were synthesized narratively to explore recurring themes such as individual traits, social dynamics, environmental factors, and school policies related to bullying. Quantitative data, such as prevalence rates and effect sizes, were summarized where applicable to provide additional context.

Thematic analysis was employed to categorize identified themes and patterns across studies, particularly focusing on factors contributing to bullying, its impacts on academic performance and well-being, and the effectiveness of interventions. Variations in findings and their implications for practice were analyzed to provide a comprehensive overview of current knowledge on bullying in schools, emphasizing practical implications and recommendations for future research. The review concluded by summarizing key findings related to the causes of bullying, its impacts on academic performance and psychological well-being, and offering recommendations for future research directions to enhance understanding and interventions in school settings. This methodological approach ensures rigor and clarity in conducting a systematic literature review on bullying, offering valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers dedicated to addressing this significant issue.

Finding and Result

Factors Contributing to Bullying

The factors contributing to bullying encompass a complex interplay of individual, social, and environmental elements. Research indicates that various factors influence the occurrence and perpetuation of bullying behaviors among children and adolescents. Social factors such as group membership, peer pressure, and family dynamics play a significant role in shaping bullying attitudes and behaviors (Goethem et al., 2010). Additionally, individual predisposing factors such as cognitive inflexibility, aggressive conflict resolution strategies, and personality traits like impulsivity and dominance contribute to engaging in bullying behaviors (Dyer & Teggart, 2007). Family dynamics, including sibling victimization, sibling bullying, and parental acceptance or rejection, are predictive factors of school bullying among adolescents (Sabah et al., 2022). Moreover, classroom and school-level factors such as school climate, teacher-student relationships, and peer dynamics contribute to the prevalence of bullying and victimization among students (Saarento et al., 2014). Hierarchical work environments, compared to relation-oriented ones, significantly contribute to workplace bullying (A. L. Jones, 2017). Additionally, genetic and environmental factors, as well as individual differences in empathy and theory of mind, influence involvement in bullying behaviors (Widiharto et al., 2022). Workplace bullying dynamics are influenced by unclear managerial boundaries, job descriptions, and interpersonal skills, contributing to upward bullying dynamics (Wilson, 2016). Factors such as workload, special education placement, and sexual identity differences are linked to bullying experiences among nurses (Johansson et al., 2020). Motives for bullying can stem from perceived weaknesses, disabilities, jealousy, and a lack of empathy towards students with special needs (Fitriati & Tabroni, 2023). Structural family characteristics such as household size, age, and gender are associated with sibling bullying perpetration, highlighting the role of family dynamics in bullying behaviors (Rehan et al., 2021). Workplace bullying can be exacerbated by work pressure, workload, and the pursuit of workplace dominance (Rilveria, 2023). Moreover, moral disengagement, attitudes towards violence, and irrational beliefs are predictors of bullying cognition in adolescence ((Cowell & Bergren, 2016). Socio-cultural and demographic factors such as child maltreatment, domestic violence, and competition for resources within the family system contribute to the bullying cycle among children and adolescents (Sallam et al., 2023). The influence of school climate, peer cultures, and contextual factors on the targets and causes of school bullying underscores the multifaceted nature of bullying dynamics (Dantchev et al., 2019).

Impact of Bullying on Students' Academic Performance

The impact of bullying on students' academic performance is a critical area of research that has garnered significant attention due to its implications for educational outcomes. Studies consistently show that bullying, whether in traditional school settings or through cyberbullying, adversely affects students' academic achievement (Werf, 2014). The negative consequences of bullying on academic performance include reduced concentration, loss of interest in learning, and lower grades (Oluwamumibori et al., 2022). Research underscores the mediating role of psychological difficulties in the relationship between bullying and academic achievement (Murphy et al., 2022). The distress caused by bullying significantly influences students' school performance, leading to academic decline (Obregón-Cuesta et al., 2022). Additionally, cognitive-motivational factors mediate the link between bullying victimization and lower academic achievement (Samara et al., 2021). Cyberbullying, prevalent in the digital age, also impacts students' academic performance negatively (Alotaibi, 2019). The direct impact of bullying, whether as a victim or perpetrator, negatively affects students' academic achievement across different grade levels (Al-Raqad et al., 2017). Moreover, bullying in school environments leads to self-sabotaging behaviors that hinder academic success (Egeberg et al., 2016). Studies exploring the relationship between bullying, theory of mind, and academic performance indicate that both bullying and poor theory of mind detrimentally affect students' academic outcomes (Clemmensen et al., 2018). The detrimental effects of bullying on academic achievement are evident across various cultural contexts, including Indonesian state Islamic universities (Safinatunnajah & Rahmawati, 2018). Furthermore, the mental health implications of bullying contribute to poor academic performance among nursing students (Muluk et al., 2021). Bullying impacts not only individual students but also the overall school climate and safety, resulting in lower academic achievement among students (Abdelaziz & Abu-Snieneh, 2021). The association between bullying experiences during clinical placements and psychological well-being contributes to lower competency in academic performance among nursing students (Ma et al., 2009). Additionally, the quality of student-teacher relationships and school connectedness moderates the effects of bullying on academic achievement (Afriliani et al., 2020). In conclusion, research on the impact of bullying on students' academic performance underscores the need for comprehensive interventions to address this issue. Understanding how bullying influences academic outcomes and implementing strategies to promote a positive and safe school environment are crucial for supporting students' educational success.

How Guidance Counselors Prevent Bullying

To effectively prevent bullying in schools, guidance counselors play a critical role in identifying, addressing, and mitigating bullying incidents through proactive measures and targeted interventions (Yuliza, 2023). (Yuliza, 2023) An essential aspect of bullying prevention involves offering personalized counseling services to both victims and perpetrators, providing a secure space for students to discuss their concerns and develop resilience strategies to navigate challenging social dynamics. (Yuliza, 2023) Additionally, counselors disseminate information on bullying behaviors, their impacts, and effective preventive actions to raise awareness and empower students to take a proactive stance against bullying. (Yuliza, 2023)

Guidance counselors also implement preventive programs that emphasize engaging bystanders in bullying situations. By fostering cognitive empathy and encouraging positive peer relationships, counselors equip students with the skills to intervene effectively in bullying incidents (Vinayastri et al., 2023). This proactive approach includes observing bullying

behaviors, assessing the urgency of situations, and encouraging students to take responsibility for creating a supportive and respectful school culture (Vinayastri et al., 2023)

In addressing cyberbullying, school counselors play a pivotal role in mediating and managing online harassment incidents. They raise awareness about cyberbullying policies, guide responsible online behavior, and empower students to navigate digital environments safely while responding appropriately to cyberbullying incidents (J. L. T. Jones et al., 2019) This proactive stance not only helps prevent cyberbullying but also promotes positive interactions among students in digital spaces.

Moreover, counselors organize seminars, class-based guidance activities, and informative sessions to educate students about bullying prevention strategies and intervention techniques (Yöndem, 2016) By enhancing awareness, teaching conflict resolution skills, and promoting empathy and respect, counselors contribute to creating a school environment that values inclusivity and mutual support (Yöndem, 2016) These initiatives collectively foster a positive school culture that prioritizes the well-being and safety of all students.

Collaboration among counselors, teachers, parents, and external experts is essential for implementing comprehensive bullying prevention initiatives. Through initiatives such as anti-bullying campaigns, cultural events, and involving external specialists, counselors establish a network of support and resources to effectively address bullying behaviors (Alqodri, 2023) This collaborative approach ensures a holistic and coordinated response to bullying incidents, underscoring the importance of unified efforts against bullying within the school community.

How guidance counselors provide support to bullying victims

To explore how guidance counselors provide support to victims of bullying, it is essential to consider the valuable role they play in addressing and preventing bullying incidents in schools. Guidance counselors are uniquely positioned to provide support, guidance, and interventions to both victims and perpetrators of bullying, contributing to a safer and more inclusive school environment (Yuliza, 2023) By offering individual counseling services, information on bullying behavior and its impact, as well as preventive and curative actions, counselors can help victims cope with the emotional distress caused by bullying and develop strategies to address the situation effectively (Yuliza, 2023)

In the context of cyberbullying, school counselors can leverage their expertise to navigate the complexities of online harassment and provide targeted support to students facing such challenges (J. L. T. Jones et al., 2019) By staying informed about social media dynamics and online behaviors, counselors can offer guidance on digital safety, responsible online interactions, and strategies to address cyberbullying incidents (J. L. T. Jones et al., 2019) This proactive approach can empower students to navigate the digital landscape confidently and seek help when needed.

For learners with disabilities who are particularly vulnerable to bullying, intensive guidance and counseling interventions are crucial in ensuring their protection and well-being (Chisala, 2023) School counselors can work closely with these students to provide tailored support, address their unique needs, and foster a safe and inclusive learning environment (Chisala, 2023) By conducting counseling sessions and implementing preventive measures, counselors can empower victims of bullying to advocate for themselves and access the necessary support systems.

In the realm of academic support, school counselors play a pivotal role in enhancing students' overall well-being and academic success (Xiong, 2022) By guiding academic planning, career mentoring, and personal development, counselors can help victims of bullying regain their confidence, focus on their studies, and set achievable goals for their educational

journey (Xiong, 2022) This holistic approach to guidance and counseling can contribute to the resilience and academic achievement of students affected by bullying.

Moreover, school counselors can collaborate with teachers to raise awareness about bullying, develop intervention strategies, and create a supportive school climate that promotes positive peer relationships.(Özkiliç & Kartal, 2012) Through class-based guidance activities, seminars, and workshops, counselors can educate both students and educators on the impact of bullying and equip them with the skills to address and prevent such behaviors effectively (Özkiliç & Kartal, 2012) By fostering a culture of respect and empathy, counselors can contribute to a school environment where bullying is not tolerated.

In addressing different types of bullying incidents, school counselors need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to implement appropriate interventions (Jacobsen & Bauman, 2007) Training and professional development opportunities can enhance counselors' ability to support victims, work with bullies, and collaborate with stakeholders to create a comprehensive anti-bullying framework.(Jacobsen & Bauman, 2007) By staying informed about evidence-based practices and intervention strategies, counselors can tailor their approaches to meet the specific needs of individuals involved in bullying incidents

Conclusion

Bullying in schools is a pervasive issue with significant implications for students' academic performance and psychological health. This systematic literature review underscores that bullying stems from a complex interplay of individual traits, social dynamics, and environmental factors. Factors such as peer pressure, family relationships, and school climate all contribute to the occurrence and severity of bullying incidents. The review consistently highlights the detrimental effects of bullying on victims, including reduced motivation, concentration difficulties, and heightened psychological distress, which collectively hinder academic achievement.

Effective prevention strategies identified in the literature include implementing anti-bullying policies, promoting positive peer relationships, and fostering empathy among students. Guidance counselors play a crucial role in these efforts by providing personalized counseling, raising awareness through educational campaigns, and engaging both victims and bystanders in intervention strategies. By creating supportive and inclusive school environments, counselors contribute significantly to mitigating bullying behaviors and supporting victims' recovery.

However, the review also acknowledges challenges such as methodological variations across studies and the need for culturally diverse perspectives in bullying research. Future research should prioritize investigating bullying across different cultural contexts and comprehensively addressing emerging forms like cyberbullying. By advancing our understanding and implementing evidence-based interventions, educators, policymakers, and researchers can collectively work toward fostering secure and respectful learning environments where all students can thrive academically and emotionally.

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