

Different Personality Dimensions and Scholastic Performance of School Going Adolescents

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Abstract

Mental health issues are fast becoming a new focus of education. In school it is observed that the dominant children employ their aggression to assert power and dominance. In a class, these students are often found to behave in manners causing uneasiness among their classmates and disturb other students with their bad manners. Technically, they are called bullies. On the other hand, some students in the class may be characterized as passive, anxious, weak, lacking self confidence, having low self-esteem etc. Bullying among school students is rather an old phenomenon. Bullying can affect a child or teen's mental health and wellbeing. It is linked to many negative outcomes including impacts on mental health. They experience decreased academic achievement. The present empirical study was undertaken to assess bullying behavior in schools and its effect on personality and scholastic performance. Total 146 students reading in class VII and VIII of schools in two districts of West Bengal i.e., Kolkata and Hooghly comprised the sample of the study. Peer Relation Questionnaire and one Personality Questionnaire were administered on the students. The annual examination marks of the students were considered as scholastic performance. The results reveal that bullying exists at various levels in the schools. Other students have scores in lower side on personality questionnaire in comparison to the bully students. Scholastic performance for bully students was found to be marginally lower than the others. The data have been analysed from different angles.

Keywords

Bullying, Mental health, Personality, Scholastic performance

I. Introduction

Mental health describes a level of psychological well being (About.Com, 2006). It can be seen as an unstable continuum where an individual's mental health may have many different possible values. The transition from elementary into high school can be a stressful time for youth, together with the physical and emotional changes of puberty (Keyes, 2002). This is also the time when mental health and bullying issues tend to arise and are most frequently first seen at school (Patel, Flisher and McGorry, 2007). School climate is the physical environment and social and cultural atmosphere of a school, and can have a strong impact on student academic performance, social behaviours, mental health and bullying (Craig and Pepler, 2003).

Personality is the particular combination of emotional, attitudinal and behavioural response pattern of an individual. It can be defined as the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychological systems that determine his unique adjustment to the environment (Allport, 1937, p. 48). According to Larsen & Buss (2005) Personality is the set of psychological traits and mechanisms within the individual that are organized and relatively enduring and that influence his or her interactions with, and adaptations to, the intrapsychic, physical, and social environments. It is also the organized, developing system within the individual that represents the collective action of that individual's major psychological subsystems (Mayer, 2007).

In general, performance is the accomplishment of a given task measured against preset known standards of accuracy, completeness, cost and speed. In educational institutions, success is measured by academic performance or how well a student meets standards set by the institution.

Researchers have sought to identify non-cognitive predictors of academic performance, including variables related to personality dispositions. It has been suggested that behavioural tendencies reflected in personality traits affect certain habits that can have an influence on academic success. Rothstein, Paunonen, Rush and King (1994) have argued that, "to the extent that evaluation of performance in an academic program are influenced by characteristic modes of behavior such as perseverance, conscientiousness, talkativeness, dominance, and so forth, individual differences in specific personality traits justifiably can be hypothesized to be related to scholastic success".

In school, some children are found to be more aggressive than others. Violence and aggression in schools are a problem in many countries around the world (Rigby and Slee, 1991; Pepler et al., 1994, Smith and Sharpe, 1994, Genta et al, 1996, Okabayashi, 1996, Olweus, 1991). The fact that some children are frequently and systematically harassed and attacked by other children has been described in the literary works, and many adults have personal experience of it from their own school days. One form of aggression that takes place at school is bullying. Bullying or Peer harassment is defined as repeated aggression from one peer against another peer who is unable to protect him / herself (Rigby, 2005). Rigby (1993) specifically defined bullies as those having an aggressive personality pattern, with the tendency to react aggressively in a variety of situations. Farrington (1993) defined bullying as repeated oppression, physical or psychological, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group. It may not be the same thing as conflict, violence or disagreement-although it may involve all these. Olweus (1987) described bullies as having an aggressive personality pattern that predisposes them to respond aggressively. By bullying, these children employ their aggression to assert power and dominance. They also tend to have an inability to control their inhibitions against aggressive tendencies and often have a positive attitude toward violence. These children do not know the correct form of asking for attention, love and support from others, including their peers. It is deliberate, harmful, verbal, physical and psychological behaviours (Tattum and Tattum, 1992). There are different forms of bullying which may result into irritability, sense of panic, social ostracism, feeling of loneliness, anxiety and depression, aggressive behaviour, formation of subgroups, introversion and shyness and impaired concentration and hampering of educational progress etc. It is one of the root causes in the development of cognitive process, personality, academic achievement and future behaviour profile.

Numerous research reports document the relationship between bullying and a variety of academic, social and mental health issues. Academic success may be strongly influenced by individual's views of their personal competence. In light of this perspective, we expect that the social experience of peer harassment may reduce

a student’s sense of competence for interpersonal interactions, which may also reduce their sense of competence for academic performance. Konishi et al. (2010) examined the link between school bullying and academic achievement for 15 year old students in Canadian schools and showed that Mathematics and Reading achievement was negatively related to school bullying. Smokowski and Kopsaz (2005) reviewed bullying characteristics and explained how bullying is directly related to school achievement.

Males tend to bully more overtly and more physically. They are more likely to be caught bullying, and their behavior is more likely to be categorized as bullying because it fits in the more traditional definition of what bullying is. Female bullying tends to occur behind the scenes and in more subtle ways. Their particular brand of bullying does not always get included in the bullying definition.

For over 50 years, researchers have been studying how boys and girls interact. Statistics show that boys are almost twice as likely to bully as girls. Olweus studied in seven elementary education schools in Portugal. The sample consisted of 387 students between 7 and 14 years old. Data are presented in terms of descriptive statistics and differences between proportions were analyzed using chi-square tests. The gender analysis of victimization and aggression shows that boys and girls are both victims and aggressors, and there are significant differences in involvement in bullying between genders and the roles played.

From the review of the literature it has been observed that various types of studies have been done in Western countries. Moreover, in many studies girls’ consistently reported being less bullied than boys. Evidence of enough research does not appear to be there to gain a clear picture of bullying especially in India and in West-Bengal also. Considering the paucity of data from India and taking into account the potential of this phenomenon which causes damage to the well being of children, this research problem is felt needed.

Keeping these views in mind, an attempt has been made to investigate the personality pattern and academic achievement of the middle grade school students and gender wise comparison has been made between the bullies and non bullies and on the other hand between two genders i.e., boys and girls.

II. Method

A. Sample

The sample comprised 146 students of ten (10) Government Aided schools in Kolkata and Hooghly districts of West Bengal. All the students were from class VII and VIII. Out of 146 students eighty were boys and sixty six were girls. District-wise number of schools and names of schools were available from a list published by the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE). Consent to participate in the study was obtained from the participants before administering the questionnaires.

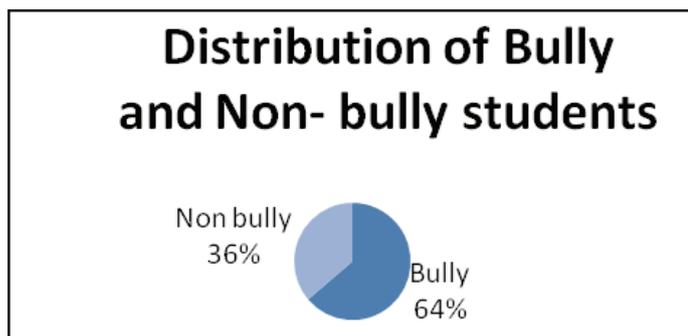


Fig. 1:

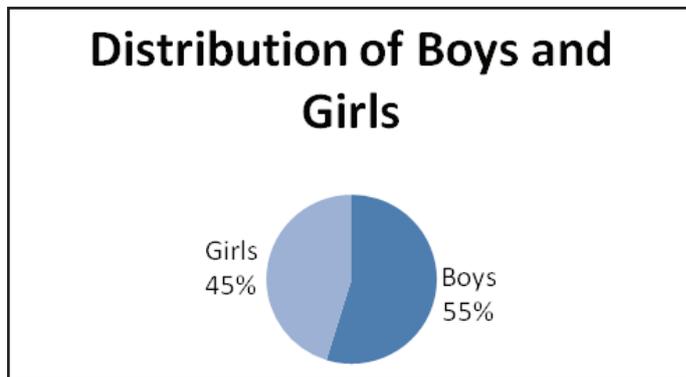


Fig. 2:

B. Tools used

The following measures were used depending upon the purpose of the study. These have been presented below.

1. Personality Questionnaire – It contains 50 items, separated into 5 dimensions viz., i) Intellectual curiosity (IC), ii) Self disciplined and dutiful (SD & DU), iii) Assertiveness (AS), iv) Cooperativeness (CO) and v) Emotional Stability (ES).
2. Peer relation Questionnaire by Ken Rigby and Phillip Slee (1991). It contains 20 items and 3 sub-scales i.e. Bully Scale, Victim Scale and Pro-Social Scale.
3. Academic Achievement – Annual Examination marks of the students.

C. Procedure

The measures were administered on the participants of the selected schools. At the same time annual examination marks of the students were collected from the school records. After collecting the data, answer scripts were scrutinized carefully and scoring was done following the scheduled scoring procedure.

D. Analysis

Table 1: Mean, SD and ‘t’ value of Bully and Non-bully students on Bully Questionnaire

	Mean	SD	t- value
Bully (N=93)	6.46	2.488	2.049*
Non-bully (N=53)	5.68	1.872	

*significant at 0.05 level

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviations of bully and non-bully students on Bully questionnaire. The mean of bully student is higher than that of non-bully students and the difference in score is significant between these two groups. It reveals that in comparison to the non-bully students, the average score of bully students is high and ‘t’ value is positively significant between these two scores.

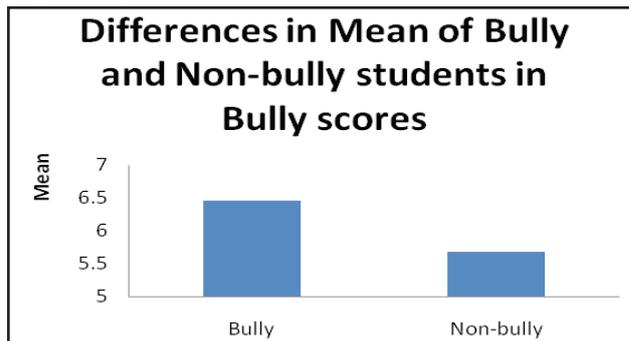


Fig. 3:

Table 2: Mean, SD and ‘t’ value of Boys and Girls students on Bully questionnaire

	Mean	SD	t- value
Boys (N= 80)	6.27	2.29	0.580
Girls (N= 66)	6.06	2.33	

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviations of boys and girls students on Bully questionnaire. The mean of boys student is marginally higher than the girls but ‘t’ value is not significant. It may be mentioned from the result that in case of bully behavior boys and girls are almost same.

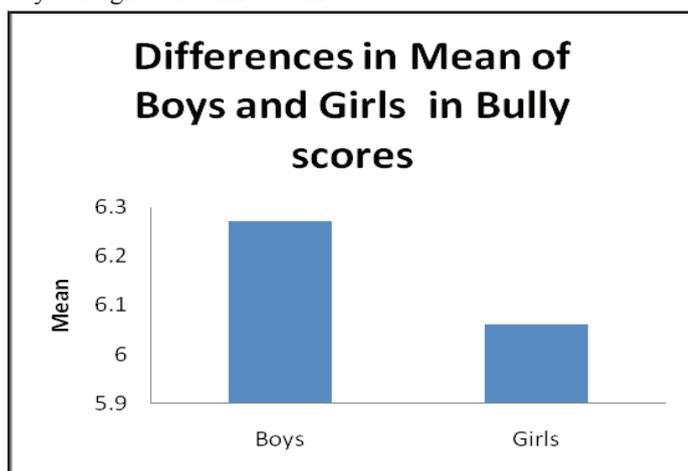


Fig. 4:

Table 3: Mean, SD and ‘t’ value of Bully and Non-bully students on Personality questionnaire

	Bully (N=93)		Non-Bully (N=53)		t- value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
IC	12.34	3.313	11.70	2.699	1.234
SD & DU	10.98	2.570	10.96	2.260	0.035
AS	13.43	2.590	13.14	3.136	0.625
CO	10.45	3.691	10.30	3.151	0.266
ES	12.88	4.287	13.40	3.995	0.755

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviations of bully and non-bully students on Personality questionnaire. The mean of bully students is marginally higher than the non-bully students in four dimensions, but in Emotional Stability (ES) the mean of non-bully student is higher than the bully ones. The ‘t’ values indicate no significant differences in personality scores between bully and non-bully groups.

Table 4: Mean, SD and ‘t’ value of Boys and Girls students on Personality questionnaire

	Boys (N= 80)		Girls (N= 66)		t- value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
IC	12.05	3.12	12.17	3.12	0.246
SD & DU	11.10	2.43	10.83	2.49	0.671
AS	13.67	2.73	12.91	2.84	1.671
CO	10.17	3.56	10.67	3.41	0.893
ES	13.73	3.52	12.29	4.76	2.157*

*significant at 0.05 level

Means and standard deviations of boys and girls students on Personality questionnaire are presented on the above table. The mean of boys’ student is marginally higher than the girls’ student on dimensions SD & DU, AS and ES. But in the case of Emotional Stability the mean difference of boys and girls students is significant. In other two dimensions, i.e., in IC and CO girls students’ average score is higher than the boys’ students.

Table 5: Mean, SD and ‘t’ value of Bully and Non-bully students on Academic Achievement

Subjects	Bully (N= 93)		Non-Bully (N= 53)		t- value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Total	269.47	121.33	324.42	137.19	2.584**

**significant at 0.01 level

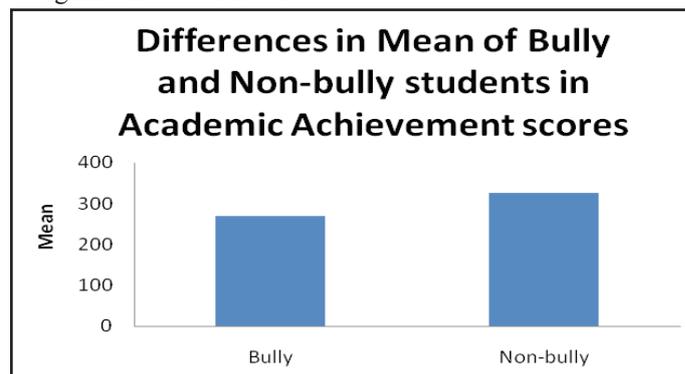


Fig. 5:

Table 5 shows the average Academic Achievement score and standard deviations of bully and non-bully students. The mean of bully student is lower than that of non-bully students and from the ‘t’ value it has been observed that difference in score is significant between these two groups.

Table 6: Mean, SD and ‘t’ value of Boys and Girls students on Academic Achievement

Subjects	Boys (N= 80)		Girls (N= 66)		t- value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Total	329.58	132.62	242.09	109.25	4.411**

**significant at 0.01 level

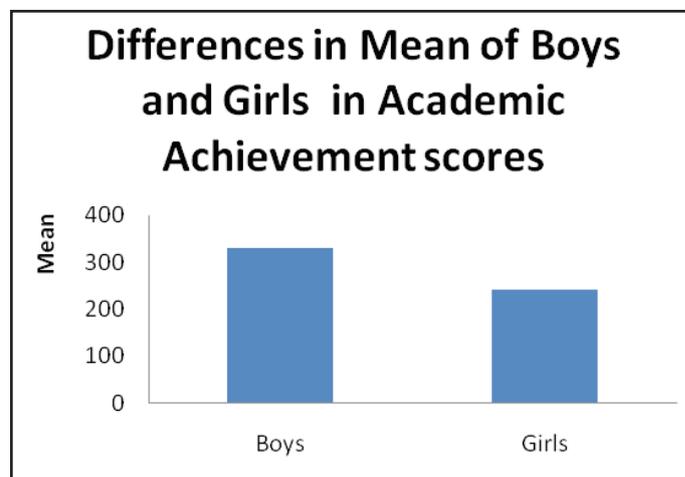


Fig. 6:

Average academic achievement score and standard deviations of boys and girls students are presented in the former table. Here the mean of boys' student is higher than that of girls' students and the difference in score is significant.

Table 7: Mean, SD and 't' value of Bully Boys and Bully Girls students on Personality questionnaire

	Bully Boys (N=50)		Bully Girls (N=43)		t- value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
IC	12.60	3.27	12.04	3.38	0.816
SD & DU	11.21	2.51	10.71	2.63	0.956
AS	13.65	2.66	13.18	2.52	0.902
CO	10.42	3.79	10.49	3.62	0.087
ES	13.69	3.73	11.93	4.72	2.048*

*significant at 0.05 level

Mean and standard deviations of bully boys and bully girls students on Personality questionnaire are presented in table - 7. The mean of boys' student is marginally higher than the girls' student for all personality dimensions except CO. But in Emotional Stability dimension the mean difference of boys and girls students is significant. It may be mentioned here that though boys and girls are involved in bully behaviour yet boys are more emotionally stable than girls.

Table 8: Mean, SD and 't' value of Bully Boys and Bully Girls students on Academic Achievement

Subjects	Bully Boys (N=50)		Bully Girls (N= 43)		t- value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Total	307.85	125.26	225.13	100.91	3.544**

**significant at 0.01 level

Average academic achievement score and standard deviations of boys and girls bully students are presented in the former table. Here the mean of boys student is higher than that of girls students and the difference in score is significant at 1% level .

III. Discussion

Mean, SD and 't' value of Bully - Non-bully, Boys – Girls and Bully Boys - Bully Girls students on Bully questionnaire, Personality questionnaire and Academic Achievement for Class VII and VIII are presented from Table 1 to Table 8. Bully and non-bully students differ significantly on Bully questionnaire but in case of boys and girls students no significant difference was found out on the same questionnaire. On Personality questionnaire no significant difference was found out for Bully - Non-bully students, whereas significant differences in Emotional Stability dimension of Personality was observed for Boys - Girls and Bully Boys and Bully Girls students. There is significant difference on average Academic Achievement score in three groups of students in this study.

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