

# Theoretical Perspective of Bullying

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** School bullying has become a common phenomenon worldwide. A student or a group of students may perform frequent aggressive behavior to a student or a group of students who cannot defend at the time of bullying. Prior to understanding what bullying is one cannot step into implementation of antibullying strategies. But the concept of bullying itself is so complex that, for the conceptual understanding of the same, one must be well understood in its background theories. Hence, it is consensus theoretical concept that some theoretical concept must be explored.

**Methods:** In This study, various sources such as published and/or unpublished web-based materials were used in order to gather information regarding theoretical foundation of bullying. For preparing this paper, materials were reviewed by using traditional or narrative literature review method. Scholar is doing PHD in TU. This paper was also presented in seminar of Tribhuvan University (TU) as a requirement of partial fulfillment of PHD.

**Results:** It is substantiated that bullying is viewing differently and people/institution have try to manage using various approaches However, implementation of the various strategies to reduce bullying have achieved only limited success. Therefore, understanding of the bullying from its root is the most

**Conclusion:** Bullying is differently seen by different individual. In order to address issues of bullying effectively, we must able to use multidimensional strategies. Different theoretical prospective definitely provides clear cut picture and makes easy for implementation of the antibullying strategies

**Keywords:** School bullying, negative behavior, violent behavior

## INTRODUCTION

Dan Olweus who is known as pioneer of bullying has defined bullying is widely used. Bullying is a frequent performing of negative behavior by a person or group of persons to a person or group of persons with the intention of hurting them. [1] Simply, bullying can be defined as repeated act of aggressive behavior of bullies to victim and bullying comprises abuse of power as well. [2] Truly, it is a subset of violent behavior along with intention of harm to victim. [3] Bullying does have three distinct characteristics: intention to harm, repeated occurrence and possession of unequal power between bullies and victims. [4] [5] Bullying consists of five elements namely; intention to harm which is premeditated, negative outcome, it involves

direct or indirect actions, repetition and unequal power. [6]

School bullying is seemingly a global problem. Millions of school children have been the victims of bullying every year. A study reveals that Molestation of schoolchildren by their own peers has damaged not only their academic performance but also their health and it also stores up several long-lasting effects. [7] Bullied children or victims are at risk for mental disorder, adjustment problems and low self-esteem. [8] Researches reveal that suicide is ranked as the third cause of death among under- fourteen children. Similarly, there is a strong association between suicides and bullying. [9] [10] In comparison to non-bullying, adolescents who involve in bullying have a greater risk of cruel and

criminal activities in adulthood. There is higher rate of incidence and prevalence of anticipatory anxiety, depression, drug abuse, substance abuse, among students who are used to involve in bullying than non-bullying. [11]

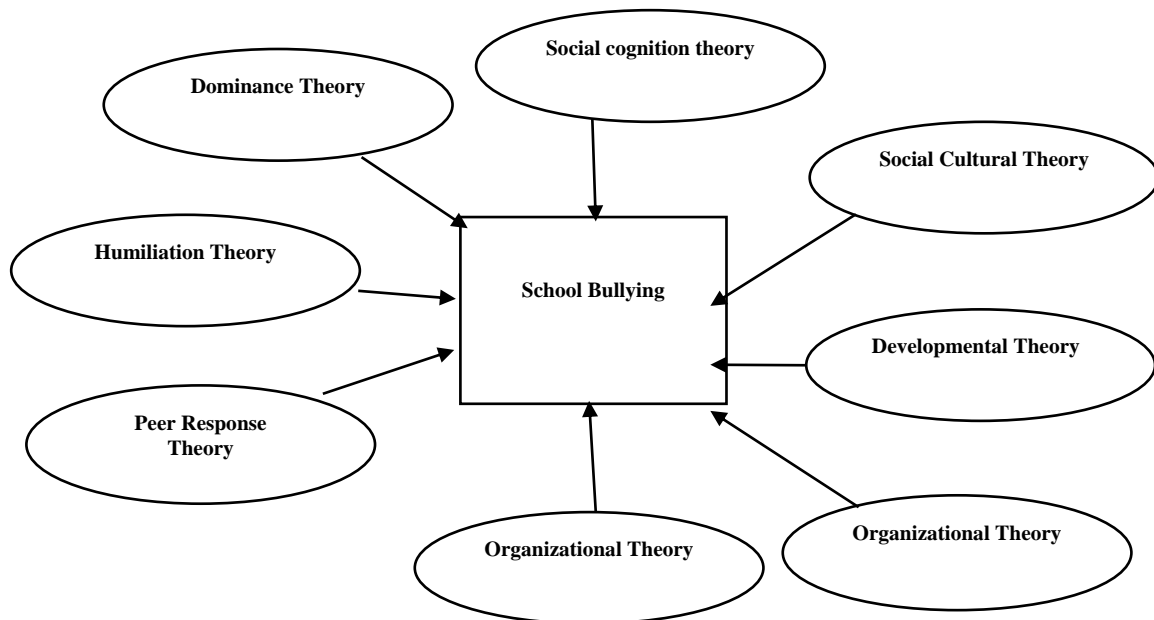
Similarly, findings of a study emphasized that disappointing aspect of bullying is not reported in most of the cases. Many victims or even parents of them are reluctant to share the problems pondering it as an annoying factor. Bullying hampers the creative potential of the offspring and destroys the mental tranquillity of bullies, victims and bystanders. [12] Keeping this idea in consideration, it is anticipated that there is a dire need to do in-depth investigation in order to examine its magnitude of effects. Therefore, this paper attempt to explore its prevalence, causes or risk factors and effects in order to dig out its real status quo scenario of school settings.

Bullying is multifaceted issue which can be best understood with the lens of various related theoretical links. Theories

help to gauge how society or school is associated to the extent of bullying behavior and what modified social and school behavior can prevent school bullying.

## REVIEW

For preparing this paper, material related to theoretical perspectives of bullying were searched and reviewed by using traditional or narrative literature review method. Because of its complexity in nature, it requires in-depth understanding, mutual effort of parents, teachers and students to stop bullying in school. Here, I would like to explore on concepts of bullying from its roots via searching common philosophical perspectives on bullying. Some of renowned theories of bullying are: social cognition theory, dominance theory, humiliation theory, social capita theory, organizational cultural theory developmental theory, Theory of Response to Group and peer Pressure and Theory of Restorative Justice.



## Theoretical Linkage of Bullying

### Social Cognition Theory

Virtually, no one will just automatically turn out to be a bully. It must have some rooted causes or risk factors in

the person's life. Children learn through observation and imitation of other's behaviors. Albert added that appreciated violence and unpunished aggressive behavior are more prone to be copied and punished. Aggressions are less liable to be

imitated. Actually, human behaviors are established by reciprocal relationship of personal determinants, behavioral determinants and environmental determinants. Learning by seeing is the fundamental of social cognitive theory of bullying. [13]

### **Dominance Theory of Bullying**

This theory is discovered by Sidanius and Pratto in 1999 as a social dominance theory [14] and later on strengthened by Pellegrini et al in 2007. [15] People engage in bullying others to get social status, available resources and to be popular in the society. For instance, in the class room some students may show bossy behavior expecting that others may venerate them. In such case, they tend to create alliance with the bullies being leaders of them. Furthermore, these types of group may initiate bullying to less powerful students or group. Sometimes, people who have some leadership traits may use their charisma and skill for dominance others as a tool of gaining social status or prestige and establishing domination. [16]

### **Humiliation Theory**

Humiliation can be defined as act of embarrassing or underestimating others. It usually occurs when a powerful person publicly discloses the meagreness of a feeble person. It is therefore a prerequisite factor to understand humiliation since its impact directly affects the victim as well as surrounding very badly. Humiliation can cause depression to victim. It curtails social cohesion. It worsens entire environment of the school. Actually, humiliation is so powerful that it consists of putting others down overpowering their self-esteem. As a matter of fact, humiliation violates the principle of fundamental human rights of people being respected or dignified. [17]

### **Social Capital Theory**

Social capital can be a resource that venerates the current and future welfare of the children. [18] Children with higher social capital resources and mutual benefits are prone to be actively involved in bullying behaviors. On the other hand, they may be

the pro-social bystanders in bullying circumstances. Pro-social bystander is the behavior that is instrumental to minimize school bullying. So, it is possible to decrease bullying by employing social capital gears that are related to school bullying. In their study, Jenkins & Fredrick also highlighted that there were positive association social capital access and Pro-social bystanders. [19]

### **Organization Cultural Theory**

It is universally acknowledged that majority of bullying behaviors are learned or acquired from the community or the society or even from the school. They are not merely inherited. Therefore, everybody can assume that bullying school culture definitely influences to bidirectional traits; it can either promote or stop bullying behavior. [20] Bullying behavior are perceived that to have amputate school environment. Parents and school members were less willing to arbitrate to act on their behalf. Similarly, it was opined that an effort to minimize or stop bullying behaviors in school without changing school culture would almost be impossible, [21] Therefore, it is important to foster safe, collaborative and openly caring environment. It is especially crucial for school where small babies and teenagers spend longer period of time than with their parents. Additionally, childhood is a highly behavior influencing time period.

### **Developmental Theory**

The cognitive process of child growth and development foregrounds the approach of Developmental Theory. This approach denotes that bullying arises from the individuals' early childhood when they begin to state themselves at the spending of others in order to form their social supremacy. At first, they tend to be so powerful that they make an effort to threaten others. [22] This approach stating that they begin to do less socially wrong ways of controlling others in the beginning. In the initial stage, verbal and indirect sorts of bullying appear to be more common than direct and physical ones. Nevertheless, the

views of Smith & Sharp are slightly different to this view. They argue that physical bullying becomes more prevalent in early childhood and the bullying gradually turns into less obvious as children become grown up. However, this opinion fails to take into account as a general explanation of bullying. [4] Evidently, social environmental influence must also be kept into consideration. Nonetheless, the developmental viewpoint is useful in providing supervision and guidance as to how bully and victim's concerns can be solved. For example, elder children are believed to be more likely to retort positively to problem-solving method which require a more sophisticated indebtedness of the possibilities offered to them. [23]

### **Theory of Response to Group and peer Pressure**

Bullying can also be explained from the lens of peer- pressure approach. It adheres that bullying is better understandable in a societal background. This approach is a kind of social framework where there is a broad social circumstance consisting of the activities and attitudes of members of the whole school community. Students and even other members including teachers and supporting staff are observed as influenced to an extent by their perceptions. This may be according school philosophy, teacher's behavior and support and student prosperity policies may be thoroughly directed to its progress. [24]

Similarly, students are strongly influenced by a smaller group of their friends with whom they rely on to some extent. These types groups are usually made within a school setting on the basis of their common interests and aim. They may also create a threat to even the other students to whom they bully. Circumstances commonly ascend in a school in such way that other children are initiated to become members and support to the group. Maybe the motive is just a protest or imagined protest, or to take revenge or simply a wish to have amusing at the cost of another individual. Most importantly, the doings of bullying are

understood as classically persistent by a joining with a group rather than by single individual motives such as personal bad intention. This view assumes that bullying is usually a group activity. In a previous study of bullying which was conducted by Olweus in Scandinavia using the term "mobbing", it symbolizes that students or children are bullied by crowds or mobs. [1]

The allegations for schools are that they must be conscious of the starring role by a group or groups as different from individuals. Schools need to recognize the groups and be accustomed to them. Numerous methods have been concocted for involving with groups of children who have bullied others or are assumed of bullying others. "No blame approach" is one of the popular ways which is suggested by Barbara and George. [25] In this approach, teachers or counselors are involved in gathering with the group of the children recognized as having bullied somebody, in the group of some other children. When bullying behaviors are supported by peers whether it is directly or indirectly that is, encouraged the "bullies" to do more aggressively. On the contrary, if the peers and others convince to bullies, it can be nasty since social unaccepted behavior that bullies initiate to behave is more benevolent towards the victim.

There is also an alternative method. In general, it initiates the use of it with older children. It is the "method of shared concern" that includes working initially with individuals. It is assumed of being in a group that is an intimidation of someone. Here, the aim of teacher is to talk his/her concern to the victim and ask them to come near to bully and then monitor closely. It helps them as quick as possible if there is any chance of mis-happening.

### **Theory of Restorative Justice**

Restorative justice theory can be defined as a system of criminal fairness/justice which emphasizes repairing harm caused by criminal activities. At the same time, the restoration of criminals is done through reunion with victims and the

society. It speaks out in the way that crime should be viewed more than just breaking the law in the society. This aims at creating mediation between the bullies, victim, and other concerned people. The goal is to discuss for a resolution to the contentment of all concerned participants. For this, it makes the bullies liable to the other parties such as parents, teacher and at large community as a whole. [26] Simultaneously, it attempts to provide the bullies or offenders with learning tips or suggestions that provide law-abiding lifestyles as a genuine substitute to criminality. It helps to prevent the offenders from initiating future peril. Final destination of this approach is transformational changes within the society; not only giving justice to victim but also trying to change bullies and moving them from such aggressive activities to healthy individual.

This theory does not deny using other approaches of bullying prevention but emphasizing on use of combined approaches. Academic valuation of restorative justice theory encourages which is evidenced by the most studies. It helps offenders in such way that they are less likely to reoffend. It has the maximum rate of victim contentment and offender liability of any method of justice. [27] Unlike other approaches, where only the victims are the focal point, this approach enhances new way of living for offenders instead merely stigmatizing or shaming to offender.

Despite its positive aspects, many writers have critiqued it by highlighting its possible soft corner approach to offenders, it may override the police and legal power of the authority and there is chance of eroding legal right. [28]

## CONCLUSION

Though, bullying is differently perceived by different individual, school bullying is seemingly a global problem. Millions of school children have been the victims of bullying every year. Basically, no one will just spontaneously turn out to be a bully. It must have some rooted causes.

Review of several theories really provides an in-depth insight of bullying and its risk factors of the person's life as well as it makes easy for implementing antibullying strategies accordingly.

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