

Original Research Article

# Big Five Personality Traits and Social Skills of School Bullies and Victims

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## ABSTRACT

Bullying has been recognized as a serious social issue affecting adolescents and children all over the world. It has devastating short term and long term impact on the overall well being of both the bully and the victim. The present study investigated the differences in personality and social skills between bullies and victims of school bullying. The sample was selected using the 'purposive sampling' technique. The total sample consisted of 150 school students (75 bullies and 75 victims) in the age group of 12-16 years selected from private and governmental educational institutions of Jammu city (J&K). Results revealed that victims were significantly higher on appropriate social skills while bullies were significantly higher on inappropriate assertiveness and impulsiveness but no significant difference were found on overconfidence and jealousy between both groups. On personality factors bullies was significantly higher on extroversion while victims were significantly higher on agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience and no significant difference were reported on neuroticism between bullies and victims.

**Keywords:** bullies, bullying, personality, social skills, victims,

## INTRODUCTION

All over the world in schools, bullying is considered as a social problem for teenagers and adolescents (Andreou, 2000; Olweus, 1994; Tanaka, 2001). Bullying means when youngsters or adolescents are exposed persistently to negative activities with respect to at least more than one of their peers who are assumed or accepted to be stronger (Olweus, 1993). Adolescents or youngsters who are targets of bullying are termed as victims and those who are culprits are termed as bullies (Wolke, 2012). A report in news uncovered that bullying in India is high and it is more across the board in the north India (as cited in Venugopal, 2008). A five year research on school bullying was conducted by "The teacher's foundation" in association with Wipro across 15 states of

India and they have found that 42% of students in class 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> and 36% of students in class 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> were subjected to harassment by peers in school campuses (as cited in Gyanesh, 2017). Peer victimization is linked with poorer psychosocial modification (Nansel et. al, 2001). Victims of school bullying displayed poorer social and emotional skills, more prominent trouble in making companions, poorer associations with schoolmates, and are more inclined towards loneliness (Nansel et.al, 2001). Bullying is intended to hurt, initiate fear and give rise to trouble in the life of the victimized individual (Greene, 2000). Bullying can be direct or relational. Direct bullying incorporates, hitting, verbal maltreatment, beating and kicking. Relational bullying includes social isolation of youngsters, for example, disregarding

them, not including them in recreations or gatherings, spreading gossip, or encircling them to be embarrassed (Woods & Wolke, 2004). Additionally youngsters or children who bully others also suffer from social and emotional problems and they indulge themselves in fights, taking other children's belongings, smoking and getting terrible scores (De wet, 2007). Postigo (2011) conducted a study on the predictive value of social skills in bullying and victimization among 641 students in the age range of 12-17 years and the findings showed that poor social skills were found out to be significant predictor of bullying. Hiloolu et al. in 2010 studied dimensions of social skills and its role in forecasting participation in school bullying and victimization. The results revealed that students' bullying levels and victimization were predicted significantly by the negative social behaviours. Students' victimization levels were also predicted significantly by negative social behaviours. Previous researches on school bullying revealed the personality characteristics of school bullies which includes animosity, a solid need to rule others and a positive attitude towards violence (Olweus, 1993). Utilizing the five-factor model, depicted that both bullies and victims suffer from high levels of emotional instability and low on agreeableness (Tani, Greenman, Schneider, & Fregoso, 2003). Colovic et al. (2015) studied the personality traits of 1095 school bullies and victims in the age range of 11-14 years. The results revealed that victims scored low on extraversion, high on neuroticism and conscientiousness whereas bullies scored low on neuroticism. Srivastava and Singh (2012) conducted a qualitative research that examined the personality of 20 school bullies and 20 control group participants in the age group of 8-11 years. Personality was assessed using Children's Personality Questionnaire & CAT- Human Figure Test. Results showed that school bullies were high on extraversion than control group. However in India, few studies have been done on the psychological factors associated with school

bullying and victimization. Thus the main purpose of this research is to address these gaps in the literature by uncovering the differences in personality and social skills between bullies and victims.

### **Objective**

1. To study the difference between school bullies and victims on personality traits.
2. To study the differences between school bullies and victims on social skills.

### **Hypothesis**

There will be a significant difference on personality traits between school bullies and victims.

There will be a significant difference on social skills between school bullies and victims.

### **Sample Description**

The sample for the present study included 150 adolescents (75 bullies and 75 victims) between the age range of 12-16 years studying in various government and private schools in Jammu city.

### **Sampling Technique**

Purposive sampling technique was employed for the collection of data.

### **Measures**

Peer Relationship Questionnaire (Rigby & Slee, 1993): Bullying and victimization was measured by using the bullying prevalence subscale of the Peer Relationship Questionnaire. It is a self-report questionnaire to measure tendency to bully others. The bully scale consists of 6 items and victims scale consists of 5 items scored on a 4-point scale, ranging from 1=Never, 2= Once in a while, 3= Pretty often, and 4= Very often. The items in each subscale were summed and used to identify bully and victims. The PRQ has been found to be of adequate validity and has been found to have adequate internal reliability coefficients which range from  $\alpha = .71$  to  $\alpha = .86$  (Rigby & Slee, 1993).

The Matson Evaluation of Social Skills in Youngsters (MESSY; Matson, Rotatori, & Helsel, 1983): This instrument is made up of 62 items, with response

options rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (always). The scale evaluates five factors: (a) Appropriate Social Skills (behaviors such as emotional expressiveness, having friends, sharing); (b) Inappropriate Assertiveness (aggressive behaviors, making fun of or abusing others); (c) Impulsiveness (behaviors such as getting angry easily or interrupting others); (d) Overconfidence (overvaluing oneself); and (e) Jealousy-Withdrawal (feelings of loneliness, lack of friends. The scale has a good internal consistency reliability,  $\alpha = 0.88$ . (Matson, Rotatori & Helsel,1983).

The Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999): It is self report inventory that measures five personality traits which are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. It is a 44 item inventory and the responses are rated on a five point likert rating scale. The scale reports a good reliability (0.83) and validity (.75).

### Procedure

Prior to data collection, consent was taken from school authorities, participants and after their willingness, the data were carried out from them. For the identification of school bullies and victims, peer relationship questionnaire was administered to 220 adolescents. Further they were assessed on personality traits and social skills. Out of 190 adolescents 75 came out to be bullies and 75 came out to be victims. Rest of the 70 participants were excluded from the research as they don't have the tendency of becoming a bully or a victim according to the peer relationship questionnaire.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of the present research work is to study the differences between school bullies and victims of bullying on personality traits and social skills. Independent sample t- test was applied to achieve the objective of the study.

Table 1

Variables	School bullies(75)		Victims (75)		T	P
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Appropriate social skills	77.86	15.50	87.30	12.69	3.33	.01
Inappropriate assertiveness	33.54	10.21	25.52	7.07	4.56	.01
Impulsiveness	12.02	4.11	9.96	3.37	2.73	.01
Overconfidence	11.14	3.58	10.38	5.99	.77	Non significant
Jealousy	9.10	3.42	8.60	3.02	.77	Non significant
Extroversion	26.80	5.92	24.08	4.82	2.51	.05
Aggreableness	31.66	5.86	34.06	6.23	1.98	.05
Conscientiousness	30.04	6.82	33.02	5.94	2.32	.05
Neuroticism	24.32	5.40	26.04	6.04	1.50	Non significant
Openness to experience	33.78	5.85	36.46	6.67	2.13	.05

Table 1 shows Means, Standard Deviations and t-ratios comparing school bullies and victims on social skills and personality traits. The comparison revealed that the following dimensions of social skills and personality are significant i.e. appropriate social skills ( $t= 3.33, p<.01$ ), inappropriate assertiveness ( $t=4.56, p<.01$ ), impulsivity ( $t=2.73, p<.01$ ), extroversion ( $t=2.51, p<.05$ ), aggreableness ( $t= 1.98, p<.05$ ) and conscientiousness ( $t=2.32, p<.05$ ), openness to experience ( $t=2.13, p<.05$ ).

Victims scored higher on appropriate social skills than bullies whereas bullies scored higher on inappropriate assertiveness than victims. These findings are consistent with the previous studies conducted by Mohammed (2012) which revealed that bullies were less likely to follow social rules and are less gracious than children who were not involved in bullying. Hussein (2010) examined the social skills of school bullies and victims. It was found that bullies are less likely to stick on to social rules and politeness than victims. Bullies scored higher on impulsiveness than victims and

the findings are in consonance with a study conducted by Lopes (2005) on bullying and aggressive behaviour which stated that bullies are more impulsive in comparison to others. The bully group and victim group did not differ significantly on overconfidence and jealousy factor of social skills. Hence, our hypothesis for social skills is partially accepted. On the comparison of personality, bullies were found to be more inclined towards extroversion than victims. The findings are in accord with previous empirical study showing that bullies are higher on extroversion in comparison to victims Sesar, Simi, & Barisic (2011). On agreeableness and conscientiousness current findings showed that victims scored higher on agreeableness and conscientiousness than bullies and the results are in agreement with the previous studies reported in an empirical research on personality traits of school bullies Pallesen et.al (2017). Openness to experience results revealed that victims scored more on openness to experience than bullies and similar findings were reported in the research conducted by khosa (2016). On neuroticism insignificant differences were found between bullies and victims. Hence the hypothesis for personality is partially accepted.

#### Limitations and future Recommendations-

The present research was done on a limited number of participants and gender differences were not studied. The current research only studied personality and social skills between bullies and victims other variables and groups were not taken into consideration. These are some of the limitations of the present research work. The future researchers may take a larger sample based on gender and more variables can be taken into consideration. Other groups like bystanders, uninvolved and bully- victims may be taken as comparative groups with bullies and victims.

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