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Defining bullying: A review of literature

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Abstract

This study aims to review different definitions of bullying. We looked for articles studies in Scopus. Studies included in this review that looked at the differences between layman and Previous researchers' definitions of bullying, and different definitions result in different outcomes. In contrast to traditional bullying, research on cyberbullying was not included in the study. Only 17 of the 606 research papers screened met the study's eligibility requirements. Dozens of studies examined how respondents gives the definition of bullying, while six looked at the different definitions are associated with different reported prevalence rates. According to the findings, layman definitions of bullying are inconsistent and do not match the criteria established by researchers. As a result of the more specific definitions, a greater understanding of the bullying behaviour emerged. In order to conduct academic research, academic researchers should always be provided with a written definition of bullying behaviour or, if possible, with a video explaining the five characteristics that define the bullying behaviour.

Keywords: Bullying, literature review, workplace bullying, cyberbullying

Introduction

The lack of a widely accepted definition of bullying is widely recognized in the literature (Migliaccio & Raskauskas, 2016) ^[14]. Baly and Cornell (2011) ^[2] found that bullying is increasingly recognized that bullying has a definition and that even small variations in the definition can lead to different results. Bullying is an important topic for academic studies because it allows researchers to make international comparisons, while a clear definition of bullying would help practitioners develop better interventions (O 'Moore & Minton, 2004) ^[19]. The first definition of bullying is given by First, Dan Olweus (1973) ^[21] investigating bullying in a school setting. Student intimidation or victimisation occurs whenever a student is subjected to negative actions by one or more other students on a regular basis, according to Olweus (1994) ^[22]. Ostracism, silence, physical trauma (such as kicking or punching), and verbal distress are all examples of similar of distressing behaviour, as Olweus (1994) ^[22] explained in greater detail. (For example, yelling and spreading rumours). To challenge the power of the victim, bullies must be weak (Dake *et al.*, 2003) ^[5]. In order to exclude occasional incidents that were not considered serious, the definition included a section that mentioned repeated harassment over an extended period of time. Previous researchers Smith *et al.* (2002) ^[26] and Arora (1996) ^[1] have frequently used the characteristics of prejudice, repetition, and power imbalance to define bullying since Olweus published his findings in 1994. The characteristics of harassment include anger, intentionality, repetition, power imbalance, and unprovoked aggression (Minton, 2012) ^[15]. These are all characteristics of harassment that can be used to define harassing behaviour. When it comes to bullying behaviour, researchers can agree on a few characteristics, but the general public cannot.

Methodology

This research has used Scopus, in a systematic manner for finding the research articles. It came to an end on November, 2021. The literature was searched using the Boolean search terms "bullying AND definition," which were combined to produce the results. It was necessary to examine the abstracts and titles of the papers that had been returned in order to determine whether or not they addressed bullying. In order to determine whether or not the papers submitted for consideration were appropriate for inclusion in this review, they were subjected to a preliminary screening process.

To be eligible for inclusion in this review, studies had to investigate whether bullying is defined differently by different people or whether prevalence rates differed depending on how bullying was defined. Articles which have not met this criterion have been omitted from the review process altogether. For the same reason, this review did not include any studies that specifically examined cyberbullying, which is a subset of bullying that differs from traditional forms of bullying in that it occurs online. Not all instances of cyberbullying are motivated by a power imbalance in the perpetrator's favour; for example, a single incident that is liked and shared by a large number of people on social media may constitute a case of cyberbullying (Moore and Minton, 2011) ^[20].

Data analysis and results

During the review process, a total of 606 journal articles were taken into consideration for inclusion. The inclusion of 17 empirical studies was made possible through the careful selection of each article. Sixteen studies looked at how people explain bullying, and six looked at how definitions of bullying affected prevalence of bullying. Every study that has looked at how people define bullying has taken into account the opinions of study participants, researchers, and their own definitions. In studies examining how definitions are presented, factors such as age, type of measurement, presentation of definitions, characteristics of researchers, and prevalence results have all been taken into consideration. The data in Table I is presented to provide a brief summary of the previous studies that looked into the definition of bullying. In Table II, data from studies examining various definitions of bullying are presented in different ways. According to the researchers, bullying is defined in Tables I and II under the heading "Characteristics defining researchers." Bullying is generally defined by

researchers in terms of the following characteristics: the intention to harm, the repetition of the behaviour, and an imbalance of power. Sawyer *et al.* (2008) ^[24], on the other hand, only use two characteristics in their analyses, whereas Baly and Cornell (2011) ^[2] use three characteristics. Bullying, according to Baly and Cornell (2011) ^[2], is defined as behaviour with the intent to harm and a power imbalance, whereas Sawyer *et al.* (2008) ^[24] define bullying as behaviour with the intention to harm and negative behaviour. Other studies had five or six characteristics, while others had none. According to Nielsen *et al.* (2010) ^[18], the four characteristics of Guerin and Hennessy (2002) ^[9], in the fourth study (direct or indirect non-sexual or non-violent acts; provocation;), were considered for inclusion in the review process out of 16,058 journal articles considered for inclusion in the review process. The inclusion of 17 empirical studies was made possible through the careful selection of each article. According to the researchers, bullying is defined in Tables I and II under the heading "Characteristics defining researchers." Bullying is generally defined by researchers in terms of the following characteristics: the intent to harm, the repetition of the behaviour, and negative use of power. on the other hand, only use two characteristics in their analyses, whereas Baly and Cornell (2011) ^[2] use three characteristics. Bullying, according to Baly and Cornell (2011) ^[2], is defined as behaviour with the intent to harm and a power imbalance, whereas Sawyer *et al.* (2008) ^[24] define bullying as behaviour with the intention to harm and negative behaviour. Other studies had five characteristics, while others had none. Using the four characteristics (intention to harm, repetition, and power imbalance) Guerin *et al.* (2002) ^[9] adds a fifth characteristic, which is described below (direct or indirect negative acts, non-sexual or non-violence)

Table 1: Review of screened research papers

Author	Measurement type	Definition characteristics	Respondents' definition
Byrne <i>et al.</i> (2016) ^[3]	Cross sectional survey	Power and intention to harm	Students failed to incorporate any of the researcher's criteria for defining bullying, such as malice, repetition, or an imbalance of power. A mean act was the most common definition of bullying among younger students, while the emotional impact of bullying was more common among older students.
Frisen <i>et al.</i> (2008) ^[7]	Self-structured questionnaire	Power and intention to harm	Bullying was defined by 30 percent of students, and 19 percent included an imbalance of power. There was no way to indicate that the narrator intended to harm anyone.
Gordillo (2011) ^[8]	Self-structured questionnaire	Repetition and power	Bullying is defined solely by the intent to harm the victim. Bullying is viewed by perpetrators as an imbalance of power.
Guerin and Hennessy (2002) ^[2]	Interview method	Power and Repetition	It is common for students to define bullying based on how the victim perceives it, rather than focusing on how the bully perceives it. characteristics (e.g., malicious intent, pattern of harm) agitation and a skewed distribution of power.
Hellström <i>et al.</i> (2015) ^[10]	Modified questionnaire	Power and intention to harm	Bullying was viewed as a problem among adolescents because of the imbalance of power and the frequency with which it occurred. A single incident of bullying, on the other hand, was also considered by them, depending on the consequences for target
Maunder <i>et al.</i> (2010) ^[12]	Standardized questionnaire	Power and repetition	Bullying was considered by all groups to include both direct (such as hitting, kicking, or punching) and indirect (such as social exclusion, nasty emails or texts, damaging property, or getting into trouble) behaviours.
Menesini <i>et al.</i> (2002) ^[13]	Stick figure	Direct and indirect acts	When asked to define bullying, respondents included social exclusion, gender exclusion, and verbal bullying among the characteristics they considered.
Monks and Smith (2006) ^[16]	Categorized task	Intention to harm and power	Only aggressive and non-aggressive behaviours could be distinguished between the ages of 4-6 and 8-year-olds. Bullying

			was defined by 14-year-olds and adults as a combination of physical and non-physical behaviours, as well as an imbalance of power and repetition.
Naylor <i>et al.</i> (2006) ^[17]	Self-structured questionnaire	Negative behaviour, repetition and power	Bullying was characterised by physical abuse, power imbalance, and verbal abuse, rather than by social exclusion, repetition, and the intent to harm the bullied person.
Saunders <i>et al.</i> (2007) ^[23]	Survey method	Intention to harm and power	Two of the five characteristics (adverse behaviour and malice) have been discovered.
Smith <i>et al.</i> (2002) ^[26]	Self-structured questionnaire	Intention to harm and power	Only aggressive and non-aggressive behaviour could be discerned by 8-year-olds. teenagers were able to do it distinctions can be made between aggressive and passive in addition to being non-aggressive Bullying, asymmetry and recurrence.
Smith <i>et al.</i> (2003)	Categorized task	Power and direct indirect negative behaviour	Adults were able to distinguish between fighting and bullying and also physical, social bullying.

Table 2: Previous research of definitions on outcomes

Author	Measurement type	Researcher definition	Outcome
Baly and Cornell (2011) ^[2]	Survey method	Power	Bullying is less likely to occur when students are watching an educational video.
Nielsen <i>et al.</i> (2010) ^[18]	Questionnaire	Intention to harm	Using a definition of bullying as a label resulted in the lowest estimate of bullying's prevalence.
Sawyer <i>et al.</i> (2008) ^[24]	Self-structured questionnaire	Negative acts	Bullying was more prevalent when participants were assessed using a behavior-based questionnaire.
Vaillan court <i>et al.</i> (2008) ^[28]	Self-structured questionnaire	Repetition and power	When the definition of bullying is given, bullying is less prevalent.

In addition to utilising the three universal characteristics, Saunders (2007) ^[23] introduces two new characteristics (adverse behaviour and victimization). As can be seen in the "participants' definitions" Different people had varying opinions on what constitutes bullying in different situations. No one, including adults and children, ever mentioned all five characteristics of bullying that are commonly associated with it. In a review of 12 studies, it was discovered that different people at different ages define bullying in a variety of different ways. When it comes to bullying, younger participants are only aware of aggressive and non-aggressive physical behaviours, according to the study. On the other hand, older participants appear to have a better understanding of the different types of bullying that can occur (e.g. physical or verbal). Table I illustrates this by comparing the ages of participants to the ages of their definitions. When presented with stick-figure cartoon images. Smith *et al.* (2002) ^[26] discovered that younger participants (5-10 years old) can only be able to distinguish between aggressive and nonaggressive behaviours when presented with stick-figure cartoon images. It was possible to make a difference between affective and non-affective behaviour, as well physical and nonphysical bullying, power imbalance, and repetition, among older participants (14+) in the study. Sawyer *et al.*, (2008) ^[24] documented that when students were provided with a written definition of bullying, the reported prevalence of bullying was lower than when students were not provided with a written definition. Because people have a greater understanding of what makes bullying as a result of educational videos, it is possible that they have a lower prevalence rate than written definitions of the phrase. In comparison to adults in the workplace who were not provided definition of bullying, bullying was less prevalent among adults with in workplace who were provided with a definition of bullying as well as an internal self-labelling measure (Nielsen *et al.*, 2010) ^[18]. According to Chen *et al.* (2017) ^[4], teachers who participate in a 1.5-hour training programme are more likely to recognise bullying than teachers who participate in a training

programme that includes a definition and a list, or a training programme that does not include a definition.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this research paper is to establish a review of extant literature of empirical research papers to determine how different definitions and forms of definitions that affect the results of different studies, with the results of the study being the primary focus. It became clear after reviewing the empirical studies used different keywords to define bullying behaviour were consistent across the researchers' definitions when the studies were reviewed. According to the findings of this research, bullying behaviours must be aggressive, intentional, and unprovoked in order to be considered bullying. Bullying, according to academics in the field, must exhibit all of these characteristics in order to be classified as bullying (Ireland, 2014) ^[11]. There was a lack of consistency in the definitions, but each definition had to include at least one of the five characteristics listed above. Among the most frequently cited characteristics of bullying were the three characteristics identified by Olweus (1994) ^[22] as being harmful, repetition of negative behaviour, and power imbalance. However, while younger participants (4-8 years old) were only able to distinguish between aggressive and non-aggressive behaviour, older participants (14 years old and up) were able to distinguish between aggressive and non-aggressive behaviour. Vaillan court *et al.*, (2008) ^[28] found that when it comes to determining how prevalent a term is in the workplace, having a definition is always preferable to relying on people to come up with their new definition). Students' definitions of bullying, in addition to being inconsistent with researchers' definitions of bullying, can also be broader in scope than researchers' definitions (Vaillan court *et al.*, 2008) ^[28]. It is preferable if educational videos are provided to students so that they can see firsthand what constitutes bullying behaviour in action (Baly and Cornell, 2011) ^[2]. Teachers' ability to identify bullying behaviour improved more as a result of a 1.5-hour training programme than as a result of a written definition, a written

definition and a check-list, or no definition at all (Chen *et al.*, 2017) [4].

Implications

In spite of the fact that bullying behaviour is clearly defined in a variety of ways, it is impossible to assume that researchers and the general public agree on what constitutes bullying behaviour. In order to conduct bullying research effectively, it is critical that everyone understands what constitutes bullying behaviour. The ideal world would be one in which students would spend the greatest amount of time possible learning about bullying. An understanding of what constitutes bullying behaviour among researchers and participants should be the ultimate goal of the study. Because self-report measures are the most common way to study bullying. To come up with a universal definition of intimidation, all of the researchers should define the traditional behaviour of the intimidation of five characteristics (aggressive repetitive behavior, intentional, not caused and power).

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