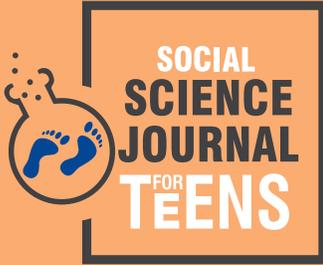


What can school anti-bullying programs do?



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Abstract

Do you feel safe at school? Schools should be a safe place where you can learn, grow, and have fun. Yet bullying is a common problem that happens in schools all across the world. Being bullied can make you feel alone and scared. It is a tough situation to go through, and it can affect your self-esteem and increase your risk of developing mental health issues. So what can be done to reduce bullying in schools?

Many schools run anti-bullying programs. We wanted to find out how effective these interventions are and what impact they have on students. We found that anti-bullying interventions not only reduce bullying but also improve mental health problems! Our results show that interventions help in a very important way to reduce bullying and its negative consequences.

Introduction

What is bullying? It is when a person (or a group of people) repetitively and intentionally hurts someone else. It can be verbal, physical, or emotional, or take place online in the form of *cyberbullying*. Bullying can happen to anyone at any time. **In the USA and Europe, about 1 in 4 students have reported being bullied at school, and about 1 in 5 have experienced cyberbullying.**

Being bullied can have a serious impact on your mental health. Kids who are bullied are more likely to feel anxious, lonely, and disconnected from school. These harmful impacts can even continue into adult life.

Over the past 20 years, many schools have developed *anti-bullying programs* to help prevent bullying. The success of these programs is constantly getting better. **From previous research we know that interventions can reduce bullying rates within schools by around 20%.**

Although we know that interventions can be successful, there are still a lot of questions that remain unanswered. By answering these questions, we can help improve anti-bullying programs.



Examples of anti-bullying posters used in schools

Source: Rise Vision

We decided to do a *meta-analysis* of previous bullying interventions in schools to answer the following questions:

1. How many students within a school are prevented from being bullied as a result of an intervention?
2. Do interventions positively impact students' mental health?
3. Are longer interventions more effective?
4. How long do the benefits last after a program ends?

Methods

We selected 69 anti-bullying studies for our analysis. These programs used lots of different methods to measure how successful the interventions were. We grouped these measurement methods according to three variables: overall bullying, cyberbullying, and mental health problems.

- We performed a meta-analysis on the 69 interventions to figure out the "effectiveness" of the programs on each of the three variables.
- We used the "effectiveness" number to find out how many people need to be included in an intervention to prevent one case of bullying. We called this the "number needed to treat." (Fig. 1)

- Using this "number needed to treat," we calculated the "Population Impact Number (PIN)" based on different bullying percentages within schools (for example, what percentage of students have been bullied). An impact number of 100 would mean that an intervention must include 100 people to stop one case of bullying.
- Then we calculated these numbers both at the end of the intervention and some time after the intervention to see how long the benefits last after a program ends.

Figure 1:
Flow diagram of values calculated in this study



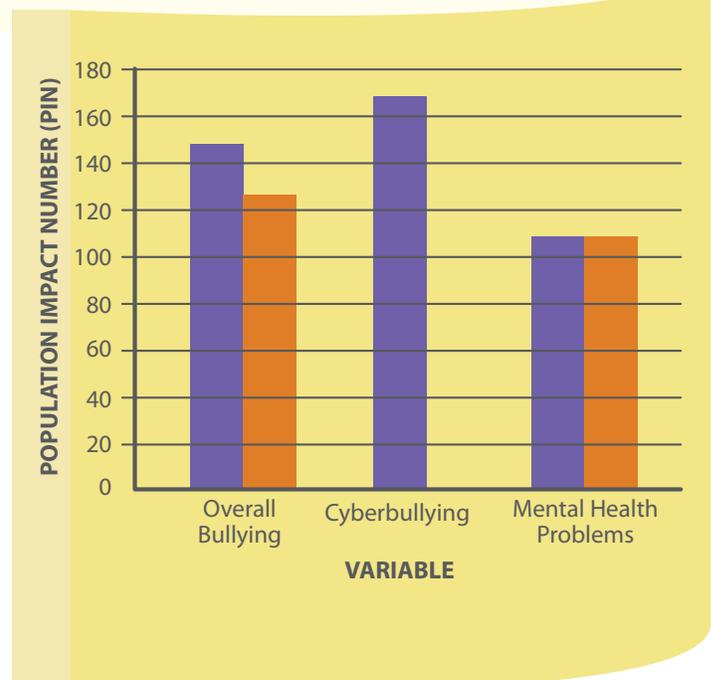
Results

The 69 studies included information from over 111,659 school students between the ages of 4 and 17.

Our analysis showed that the interventions were effective at reducing all three variables: overall bullying, cyberbullying, and mental health problems within schools. The Population Impact Number at the end of the intervention was 147 for overall bullying, 167 for cyberbullying, and 107 for mental health problems. (Fig. 2)

Which variable had the lowest PIN at the end of the intervention? Is a low PIN better or worse?

Figure 2:
Population Impact Numbers (PIN) of anti-bullying interventions at the end of the intervention (first bar) and after a follow-up period (second bar)



The average length of the interventions was 29.4 weeks. However, our meta-analysis showed the length of the anti-bullying program did not impact how effective it was. We also found that interventions involving the whole school worked as well as targeted interventions. **Anti-bullying programs**

were still effective at reducing bullying and mental health problems after an average follow-up time of 44 weeks. The studies that looked at cyberbullying did not include a follow-up analysis, so this could not be included in our results.

Discussion

Our review has shown that anti-bullying interventions successfully reduce the amount of bullying and cyberbullying within schools. These interventions also improve the mental health of students. Together, our findings support the use of anti-bullying programs within schools. They can be used as a powerful tool to tackle bullying, cyberbullying, and improve mental health problems for young people around the world.

Although we know that anti-bullying programs are successful, we think they can be improved even more.

Additional research is needed to create the most effective program that helps as many students as possible. **Future studies should focus on specific interventions for students that are at a higher risk of bullying, such as those living with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ youth.** These changes will help to improve interventions to help schools reduce bullying and improve global mental health.

Conclusion

Over the past 20 years, anti-bullying interventions have reduced bullying. But unfortunately, the problem still exists today. Anti-bullying interventions are just one piece of the puzzle. **There are many things that you can do to help prevent bullying:**

- Treat everyone with respect.
- Do not join in on bullying behavior or spread gossip.
- Stand up and say something if you think someone is being treated unfairly.

- Tell a parent or teacher if you see that someone is being hurt.
- Seek help from an anti-bullying organization like <https://www.stompoutbullying.org/>.
- Find out about your school's anti-bullying policy. If there isn't one, encourage them to start an anti-bullying program.

Glossary of Key Terms

Anti-bullying program – a program used by a school to help prevent students from harm by other students. Methods could include playground supervision, teacher training, information for parents, videos, or changes to the school anti-bullying policy, for example.

Cyberbullying – using electronic communication to bully a person. For example, through a text message or on social media.

Interventions – actions taken to try to get a specific result. Anti-bullying programs help stop bullying.

Meta-analysis – looking at data from many different studies of the same subject to look for overall trends.

Population impact number (PIN) – a measure of how many people need to be included within an intervention to prevent one case of bullying. For example, a PIN of 100 would mean the intervention would need to include 100 people to prevent one case of bullying.

Variables – the things that are changing in an experiment are called variables. A variable is any factor, trait, or condition that can exist in differing amounts or types.

Check your understanding



- 1 How many school children have reported being bullied?
- 2 What can anti-bullying interventions accomplish in schools?
- 3 Based on this study, the “number needed to treat” value to reduce overall bullying is 22. If a school had a bullying percentage of 30%, what would the Population Impact Number (PIN) be? Hint: use the flowchart in the methods section to help you.
- 4 Have you, or any of your friends, ever been bullied? Describe one bullying experience and explain what happened.
- 5 What would you do if your friend was bullying a classmate?

REFERENCES

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UNICEF: Cyberbullying: What is it and how to stop it.

<https://www.unicef.org/end-violence/how-to-stop-cyberbullying>

Kidscape: Facts about bullying

<https://kidscape.org.uk/advice/facts-about-bullying/what-is-bullying>

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