BULLYING: A MENACE TO THE SOCIETY

Ankita Das[1] Dr. Alok Kumar Patra[2]

ABSTRACT

From Avery to Rachita no one deserved those painful deaths. Most of us have been the victims of bullying which is one of the most common expressions of violence. Research on bullying started more than forty years ago and this event was defined as an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or an individual repeatedly against a person who cannot defend themselves. Bullying is often defined as a repeated aggressive behavior where one person or a group of people in a position of power deliberately intimidates, abuses, or coerces an individual with an intention of hurting someone. Two important components here are repeated acts which are harmful and imbalance of power. This overview outlines the characteristics of bullying, its types, impacts and how it can be prevented. Bullying is an ongoing problem which is creating immense suffering for the victims and needs to be stopped.

Keywords: Bullying, Gender, Students, Harassment, Ragging

1.   INTRODUCTION

Recently, I came across a trending Japanese Anime titled "Jujutsu Kaisen" which was fun to watch. However, that one part which made me concerned was when the fictional character named Yoshino Junpei, a 17-year-old student was being tortured and abused by his classmates. A kind guy like him did not deserve all these, these so-called mates would beat him up for something he never did that is passing derogatory comments on girls, stalking and so on. They were brutal towards him, even went to the extent of spreading rumors about him, did not even let him exist in peace. Junpei stopped attending classes and at the end he lost his life when a closed one betrayed him. Well, let us not go deep into how he died as the main point of discussion here will be "he was a target of ruthless **bullying**." In real life, there are a number of people who are being bullied every day and

---

[1] 2nd Year MA Sociology, School of Social, Financial and Human Sciences, KIIT Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar. Email: ankitadas121485@gmail.com

[2] Assistant Professor (Sociology), School of Social, Financial and Human Sciences, KIIT Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar.

bullying is not confined to certain area as an individual faces it at home, school, workplaces. Now, what is with the issue of bullying? How can it be a social issue? Victims of bullying are committing suicides as it is making them depressed and are also being murdered making it a social issue that needs a lot of attention.

2.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bullying is a pattern of behavior, rather than an isolated incident. It can be physical and verbal. This behavior of bullying is repeated an also has the potential to be repeated. It includes an *imbalance of power* that is people and young adults who use physical strength, access to embarrassing information, spreading rumors and if these bullies are popular in order to show up their coolness or to impress others and for that they usually target the ones who are weak. *Repetition* is when bullying behaviors occurs frequently and this aggressive behavior towards the same individual or a group happens repeatedly. *Intentional* is that this behavior is a deliberate attempt to hurt a person. These serves as the basic characteristics of bullying.

The Teacher Foundation conducted a survey that brought into light the impacts of bullying in schools where 47% of students between class 4 to 8 confessed that they were being bullied by their classmates. And 26% of the students confessed that they were engaged in bullying others. The review even mentioned about "the feeling of being left out" element. Twenty-three percent of the students between class 4 to 8 felt left out during breaks or games period. Worrying fact is 50% of children are bullied at some stage in their school life. And people believe that bullying is rare, youths fear the rules and regulations at the educational institutions, but it is not true. Students who are experiencing it for them it can be a norm and a common event.

Instances of bullying or ragging in college in 2017 skyrocketed to 889 cases. Worst part is out of 872 cases in 2017 only 390 of the students were punished. These are worrying signs for students in India. As human beings why do we have to dehumanize

each other? As a society we need to take actions and to prioritize our action against bullying. Educational institutions, workplaces which promises safe environments makes us question if they are really safe or not. These institutions have completely failed in ensuring safety of the people who study and work there. It shows that the authorities are not serious when it comes to punishing the offenders. Offenders as well find new ways to escape from punishment. But after some time, they again start their problematic behavior.

3.   OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.   To define the event of bullying.
2.   To find out its several types and experiences faced by individuals
3.   To examine its consequences
4.   To provide solutions on how to prevent it

4.   METHODOLOGY

The study has used research tools to collect the secondary data for generating desk review. In the present study, the researcher has taken information from various articles, journals, and published articles.

5.   FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Bullying comprises of actions like attacking someone, giving death and rape threats, cooking up rumors and it spreads like wildfire even people believe in dumb rumors without giving it a thought for the sake of bullying someone so that they can enjoy the scene they created.

They exclude the targeted person from the group. Both children and adults who face bullying everyday become depressed, tired, anxious and give up on life as they do not have someone upon whom they can rely on, with whom they can be comfortable with. The victims develop trust issues, they even stop talking with their family members, they isolate

themselves. Even when they complain against bullying that they face people usually do not believe them and authorities shoo them away. "Actions will be taken" when? After people have lost their lives? The rituals that these universities, workplaces and schools have is having big boards with "no bullying" signs, they need to understand it is not going to work until and unless these warnings are not put into action.

5.1 Types of Bullying

There are distinct types of bullying which is being experienced by children and adults.

1. *Physical bullying-* includes hitting, kicking, pinching, pushing or damaging property and it causes short term and long-term damages. It starts in a different form and later progress to physical violence. The main weapon being used by the bully here is strength and also an object while attacking. A group of people target the one who do not fit to their standards which leads to the situation of being taunted, abused, and beaten up by their classmates and ending is often fatal. If we look into the matter, the teachers are also the reason someone becomes a target of bullying.

    Like when teachers point out a flaw of a student which can be the way they walk or talk, and this becomes a hot topic which provides an opportunity to other children to ridicule and humiliate the target. Rohit, 13 years old was cornered and was sexually abused by a group of his classmates in the washroom. He was teased for being 'thin and weak and was feminine." Complaints were filed against the bullies however this incident affected him so much that he stopped talking to his friends, family members, his grades went downhill and later he was diagnosed with Type A cluster Personality Disorder.

2. *Verbal Bullying-* it includes name calling, insults, teasing, homophobic, racist remarks. It does not involve any physical contact. Here, the bully lies about the target, nickname them, derogatory name calling, threatening, talking in a rude way without any reason, laughing at someone, mocking at the way someone presents themselves or the way they speak, use of body language to torture someone. Bullies

here dominate, control others, and try to show that they are superior and powerful. In order to avoid trouble most of the bullies use verbal techniques.

A recent incident was when Avery, a high school student committed suicide by jumping off from the rooftop of the apartments he was staying in. He was frequently harassed and bullied by his classmates for his sexuality and was also sexually harassed in the school washroom. Here you can see another type of bullying that is verbal bullying where he was called names like "chakka," was labelled as a 'girl" and this made him depressed. He also had a learning disability he was dyslexic, and his principal verbally abused him for taking "advantage of his disability." He could not tolerate the social exclusion. Avery was an artist, singer, poet, writer had a unique dressing sense and wanted to become a fashion designer. Instead of encouraging him, his peers mocked him for who he was. Complaints were filed yet no actions were taken. After his suicide, the school released a statement saying, "those students are no longer a part of our school." They say school is our second home, teachers are our guide, well what happened here at his school does not approve the above lines. Not only this but many schools have this culture of bullying. For decorations they have these no bullying signs. Lives are lost yet they are acting as if bullying is nothing more than a friendly attack.

On 2nd July 2022, Rachita, an under-graduation Arts student committed suicide and the reason was depression which was due to her seniors who always bullied her, labelled her a 'psycho' as she used to read till late at nights and she was mocked because she was preparing for civil services. Upon seeing her they would start saying "here comes the IAS." The trio aka the bullies did not let her study and were always disturbing her. She ended her life as she was fed up with the behavior of these seniors and the harassment by them. Now, this trio is underground, hiding from the punishment that is waiting for them.

3. *Relational Bullying-* referred to as social aggression is a bullying that uses relationships to hurt others. It denotes any bullying which is done with the intention to hurt someone's reputation or social standing and it includes physical and verbal

bullying techniques. Making someone feel left out or what is called social exclusion is a common type of relational bullying. A technique by bullies to control others and improve and establish their social standing. It can continue without being noticed. This can occur behind a person's back that leads to not trusting anyone and feelings of alienated and alone. It includes encouraging others to ignore and isolate the target, spreading false information, baseless gossips about a person, using humiliating nicknames and continuing when asked to stop.

Person "A" bullies talked dirty things about her behind her back, would write "dark and fat" behind A's bench, would write up songs about how after games period she would stink (don't we all stink when we sweat?), while dancing how Person A looks, how her body acts while playing, if she looks like a baby elephant running, how dark skinned she is. Weight checking days was the worst as Person A could hear the entire class whisper about it, realizing she would be mocked and called names. Even the principal would give advice on how one should look, "don't eat cakes you are already fat it will make you more fat" this leads to more new nicknames for not looking like other slim girls in the class. As singer Taylor Swift mentioned "rumors fly" well, somethings that was never ever done by person A would spread like a wildfire making her wonder "when did I do it?" This often results in low confidence, anxiety, depression, fear of going to class and finding ways not to attend it. Well, person A is not dead.

4. *Cyberbullying*- often seen as less harmful form of bullying that exists online and does not manifest itself physically. It is often dismissed as being just s "couple of comments online" which is easy to ignore. However, it is as harmful as other types of bullying and is dangerous and takes a lot on people's mental health. In the digital world we are all dependent on our phones, when it comes to bring someone down people engage in all sorts of ways to harass someone. It includes threatening messages, destructive writings, posts, pictures which are being morphed and recordings that is being used against a person, many people are extorted if they do

not do a certain thing then their private photos, videos and chats will be leaked. It is also impersonating someone and sending mean messages to others on their behalf. Flaming is the use of vulgar language on someone, stalking, threatening someone to commit an act of violence or threats of pornography.

Last year a 17- year- old male student of class 11 stalked and extorted a woman on social media and also sent emails that contained abusive and obscene messages with threats to morph her images if she did not extend her sexual favors. Later complaint was filed, and he was caught. "Bois Locker Room" has shown us that how the digital world is filled with profiles which are fake and are used for illegal works. It was an Instagram group where obscene messages and morphed pictures of underaged girls were shared. There were members who made objectionable comments on women and glorified rapes.

"Bulli Bai and Sulli deal case" Bulli Bai app was created in November last year by Aumkareshwar Thakur is a harassment tool to target Muslim women. It put Muslim women on an "online auction" The photos belonged to Muslim women active on social media including prominent journalists, activists, and artists. The alleged mastermind behind it was Niraj Bishnoi, Mayank Rawal, Vishal Kumar Jha and a 19-year-old woman. Everyone here is a college student and were also a part of hate groups that targeted social media users with abuse and harassment. Well, these are just a few examples of what is happening in our society. We can say this is just the tip of an iceberg, there is more to it.

5.2 Impacts of Bullying:

Bullying affects everyone. Those who bully, those who are bullied and those who witness it. It is connected with negative outcomes like impacts on mental health, substance abuse, suicides. Let us talk about it in brief.

People who are bullied- Issues of depression, anxiety, increased feelings of sadness and loneliness, changes in sleep and eating patterns, and loss of interest in the activities that one enjoyed earlier. Children have decreased academic achievement, scoring less and

not participating in activities, skipping classes, and dropping out of school. Lack of quality friendships, low self-esteem, having nightmares, being suspicious of others, display prominent levels of emotions which indicates vulnerability and low level of resilience. In extreme cases are at a higher risk of self-harm or suicides.

People who bully others- also engage in violent and other risky behaviors. They are more into alcohol abuse and taking other drugs this becomes a habit in adolescent phase and they carry it into their adulthood life. They get into frequent fights, vandalize property, and even drop out from school. They engage in sexual activities at a youthful age. They display high levels of aggressive behavior that impacts their future, struggle to develop and maintain healthy relationships, have difficulty integrating into education institutions or at workplace. They also become abusive towards their partners and children as adults. They face difficulties understanding boundaries and limits.

Effects on bystanders- those who witness bullying behavior may be reluctant to attend school, they feel scared and guilty for not doing anything, they also experience pressure to participate in bullying and they become anxious and worried. Research has found that effects of bullying can last well into adulthood. The consequences of being bullied by friends has a greater impact on mental health in adulthood. When a kid is being bullied, they can experience a psychological impact which does not go away simply as there are side effects which will follow you till the end of your life.

5.3 How to heal?

First of all be true to yourself about the pain and torture that you experienced, and you don't have to lie about it, speak whatever happened, each and every detail, make healing your priority, take time to heal, talk to a counselor as they can help you in making sense of your feelings and to reclaim control over your life. Thinking about bullying that one experienced in childhood will interfere a lot in adulthood and how one views themselves. One is said to be recovering when they come to terms with what they have faced and

changed the way they view others and themselves. Recovery takes time, be patient with yourself.

5.4 Preventing Bullying

In preventing bullying parents, school staff, caretakers have a key role to play. At first, they need to explain students about what is bullying and how it is unacceptable, and they must stand up against it and to get help when they witness bullying taking place. Strategies must be taught to people like how they should manage the bully, they must confidently and directly say no if these doesn't work then walk away. As a parent or a teacher or a close one must keep the lines of communication open. Know their friends, ask about school, and keep up with how their day was. Assure them that they are not alone in addressing problems. Encourage people to enjoy their hobbies as this can build confidence and friendship which will help protecting one from bullying. Show kids how to treat others with kindness and respect. Educational institutions must develop a positive culture and to guide a social-emotional learning. It includes implementing policies and fostering attitudes which creates warm inviting environment where students and staffs can feel safe and supported. Teachers must interact with each, and every student and they must encourage students to be supportive and caring towards their friends.

Bullying is not limited to school and universities as a recent study found that 75% of the employees have experienced and witnessed bullying at organizations where they work in. Exclusion of colleagues from groups, playing pranks at someone's else expense, office environments often have bad behaviors which leave victims to feel alone and isolated. Constant bullying is damaging to employees. What can be done? Establish a clear code of behavior how one must act. Managers should promote healthy environment and professional relationships and must avoid ambiguity. Company values should never be left open to interpretation. Complaints filed by employees must be taken seriously, followed by proper actions.

6. CONCLUSION

What is common between the story of Junpei Yoshino, a fictional character and the bullying cases in real life transcending borders? Well, the educational institutions and workplace being ignorant, sparing the bullies as they are from good families and have a high social status even if they are taking actions, it is too late. We can say, it is a social fact that people do not make it a priority to take proper measures to prevent bullying. Ardent followers of "bullying is unacceptable" however, when it comes to preventing, they do not care about addressing it. Bullying is wrong and it is not cool, and it makes one a terrible person. Whatever the form of bullying, it affects the victims deeply. Many lose their life because of it and those who do not commit suicide view the world differently. In order to prevent the aggressive behaviors, it is essential to recognize the signs, to make bullying a thing of past and not the present and future.

REFERENCES

Einarsen, S. (1999). The nature and causes of bullying at work. *International journal of manpower,* 20(1/2), 16-27

Farrington, D. P. (1993). Understanding and preventing bullying. *Crime and justice*, 17, 381-458.

Olweus, D. (2003). A profile of bullying at school. *Educational leadership,* 60(6), 12-17.

Rettew, D. C., & Pawlowski, S. (2016). Bullying. Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics, 25(2), 235-242.

Rigby, K. (2003). Consequences of bullying in schools. The Canadian journal of psychiatry, 48(9), 583-590.

Smith, P. K. (2004). Bullying: recent developments. *Child and adolescent mental health*, 9(3), 98-103.

http://preventingbullying.promoteprevent.org/what-bullying

https://blog.ipleaders.in/bullying/?amp=1

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bullying

https://theprint.in/india/dps-student-suicide-case-mother-holds-school-responsible-for-sons-death/849802/?amp

https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/bullying/cyberbullying/what-is-cyberbullying

https://www.womensweb.in/2022/07/justice-for-arvey-queer-students-insensitive-school-system-june22wk5sr/