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The Influencing Factors and Intervention of Adolescent School Bullying

Zhou Xinyu*

Department of Literture，Northwest University，ShanXi Province，China
1134836823@qq.com
**corresponding author*

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Abstract: Bullying is a repetitive ofefensive behavior intended to harm and with asymmetric power. School bullying is a special bullying behavior in which students are the main participants. It has varying degrees of negativ Impact on the adolescents involved. In recent years, school bullying incidents have emerged one after another, and have received extensive attention from researchers. Research on school bullying has gradually been enriched. This paper reviews previous studies on bullying behavior in schools, and explores and summarizes the factors that lead to bullying behavior in adolescents from four main aspects: personal, family, school, and social environment, as well as some intervention methods for these influencing factors, hoping to provide theoretical support for establishing more effective intervention and prevention measures.

1. Introduction of school bullying

Bullying is generally regarded as an aggressive behavior with a certain characteristic, a behavior that harms or is inappropriate for another person [1-3]. The evolutionary theory believes that bullying is a strategic attempt to gain a strong dominant position among peer groups [4]. Traditional bullying usually includes three obvious characteristics: intention to harm, recurrence, and asymmetric power [5].

School bullying is a kind of bullying that occurs between students. It is a phenomenon that exists widely and has received widespread attention from educators and psychologists. School bullying occurs when a student is repeatedly exposed to intentionally negative behaviors (including direct behaviors, such as insulting and assault) from one or more students (individuals or peer groups with greater power than the victim) or deliberately disrupting relationships (such as spreading rumors) [6].

Bullying behavior usually includes several different subjects – perpetrator, victim, and witness. Some researchers have also defined another type, namely, victim-perpetrator, who is both the victim and the perpetrator [7]. In current research on school bullying, self-report questionnaires are usually used to measure bullying behavior, such as the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire. Various forms of bullying include direct physical and verbal harassment, threats, and coercive behavior (including race and gender), as well as more indirect or relational harassment, such as deliberate social isolation, spreading rumors, and manipulating friendship are measured with the questionnaire [8].

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School bullying usually produces different levels of negative psychological, behavioral, educational, and social consequences for the participants in this behavior. For bullies, teenagers who show bullying in schools will have more criminal and anti-social behaviors in society, as well as other external problems [9-10]. For victims, they are more likely to have depression and other internal problems than teenagers who have not been bullied [11]. Therefore, researchers and theories try to explain the causes of bullying, including the theoretical framework at the system level and at the individual level. Among them, the former is based on the broad social conditions of a specific society and the complex interpersonal relationship in the youth's major social units (schools and families), which highlights the environmental causes of bullying. The individual-level framework helps explain the personal internal processes that may lead adolescents to decide to engage in bullying behavior [12].

Studies on the classes, schools, communities and other related aspects of the participants of school bullying have shown that as public health issues, school bullying and related problems have caused serious impacts and huge losses on society [13]. Therefore, the research and intervention of youth bullying not only helps to provide a safe learning environment, but also helps the society to obtain great economic benefits [14].

2. Risk Factors of school bullying

2.1. Personal factors

A large number of studies have shown that the occurrence of bullying is related to the personal characteristics of the perpetrator.

For example, low self-control is a common psychological feature of school bullying perpetrators. Individuals with low self-control generally have the following characteristics: impulsive, irritable, adventurous, and tend to choose simple tasks and physical activities [15-16]. Therefore, they pursue immediate ease and satisfaction without considering the long-term consequences [17]. Unnever and Cornell (2003) studied 3,038 students from six public high schools, and found that the perpetrators of bullying have lower scores on the Self-control Scale, in other words, low self-control is an important indicator to predict bullying behavior [18].

In addition to low self-control, researchers believe that self-esteem is closely related to bullying behavior. Studies have shown that there is a strong negative correlation between self-esteem and peer victimization [19]. Although no relationship between self-esteem and aggressive behavior has been found, there is a view that bullies tend to show lower self-esteem [20].

Moreover, the personal risk factors of perpetrator also include moral disengagement. Social cognitive theory defines moral disengagement as a cognitive process in which individuals adjust the cognition of their own harmful or offensive behavior by relaxing the internal self-regulation mechanisms. They reduce the harmful effects, their responsibility, and the painful identification with the victim by redefining their own behavior [21]. Pornari and Wood (2010) used Demographic Questionnaire and Peer Aggression/Victimization Questionnaire to measure 339 students in grades 7-9, and found that moral disengagement is positively correlated with traditional bullying behavior [22].

2.2. Family factors

A large number of studies have shown that family factors are important in the occurrence of bullying. Rigby is one of the first researchers to study family factors in bullying behavior. His research results found that bullies have more negative views of their family environment than individuals who do not participate in bullying behavior [23].

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The parenting style largely defines the family environment. Darling and Steinberg (1993) defined parental education as the attitudes of fathers and mothers towards their children. These attitudes are communicated to them, and as a whole, they create an emotional atmosphere that affects their development [24]. Studies have pointed out that children who bully their peers are more likely to come from families where parents adopt authoritarian and severe punitive parenting methods [25], and children of authoritarian parents often show bullying behavior [26]. Olga Gómez-Ortiz and others have studied the relationship between bullying behavior and parental styles. The results show that there is a correlation between parental styles and the tendency of teenagers to participate in bullying behaviors. Specifically, if teenagers can have pleasant emotional communications with their parents and believe that they have greater autonomy, they tend not to participate in bullying behavior, and teenagers who participate in bullying behavior usually think that their parents have psychological or behavior control over themselves. Further research has found that if the parenting method is non-democratic, the parents will tend to use punitive discipline. This parenting method will increase the risk of adolescents participating in bullying. Therefore, parents should adopt a democratic way of upbringing and have appropriate behavioral control over their children, so that young people can feel the restrictions set by adults without feeling authoritarian, and form an atmosphere of autonomy and humor to promote emotional connection and effective communication, as well as cultivate a sense of security and support in children's cognition, which helps prevent or reduce potential bullying behavior [27-28].

In addition to parental styles, the parenting behavior itself will also have an impact on adolescents' behaviors. Meta-analysis shows that negative parental behaviors are related to a moderate increase in the risk of adolescents becoming bullies [29]. Besides, some abused children display highly aggressive [30] and anti-social behavior [31], which also indicates that they may be more inclined to bullying behavior. Kawabata et al. (2011) showed that adolescents who perceive positive parental behaviors including emotional sensitivity and warmth showed lower levels of relationship aggression, while those who described their fathers as harsh, rarely involved or likely to adopt psychological control showed more aggressive behaviors [32]. In addition, with regard to the relationship between parental behaviors and individual aggressive behaviors, some studies have shown that indulgence can best predict victimization experience, and authority can best predict bullying behavior [33].

Parental support and time spent with parents can also affect bullying behavior. Mann et al. (2015) analyzed data on students in all secondary schools in Iceland between the ages of 14 and 16. The results show that parental support and time spent with parents can effectively reduce school bullying among teenagers [34]. Studies have shown that parent-child conflict, parental monitoring and child self-disclosure also have an impact on bullying behavior. Kazdin (1992) pointed out that the conflict between parents and children is closely related to the external problems of children (such as bullying behavior), which directly or indirectly strengthens the child's aggressive response [35]. El-Sheikh and Elmore Staton (2004) examined whether parent-child conflict can be used as a predictor, mediator, and key to adolescent bullying behavior. The results show that a higher level of parent-child conflict is a factor that leads to adolescent aggressive behavior [36]. Parental monitoring is defined as a series of related parenting behaviors, including paying attention to and tracking children's position, activities and adaptations [37]. Laird et al. (2003) found that lower levels of bullying indicate higher levels of surveillance. From the perspective of child effects, higher levels of bullying are due to the reduction of parental surveillance [38]. Child self-disclosure refers to the information that children are free and willing to provide to their parents. Stattin and Kerr (2000) proved that adolescent exposure indicates less disruptive behavior [39].

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2.3. School-society factors

School education plays a leading role in the development of people's body and mind, and has a profound impact on the development of adolescents' cognition and behavior.

Many studies have found that the larger the school is, the higher the incidence rate of school bullying will be. Stewart (2003) used 10,578 students as a sample to explore the impact of different levels of factors on school bullying. The results show there is a positive correlation between school size and bullying behavior [40]. The social disorganization theory believes that some school-level indicators, such as a high student–teacher ratio or a high concentration of student poverty, may be an important predictor of school bullying, and may be related to an increased risk of bullying [41]. Khoury-Kassabri et al. (2004) used a sample of 10,400 students from grades 7 to 11 in 162 schools in Israel to predict school bullying. They found that the student–teacher ratio in the school can better predict school bullying compared with the overall size of the school [42]. Koth et al. (2008) showed that in schools with a large teacher-student ratio, it is difficult for teachers to effectively manage student behavior, which in turn may provide more opportunities for bullying to occur [43]. The high concentration of students with low socioeconomic status has also been verified to be one of the factors in the occurrence of school bullying. Barnes et al. (2006) found that schools in areas with higher poverty levels have more bullying behaviors among students [44].

In addition to school-level factors, the individual's own state in the school is also a factor that affects the occurrence of bullying behavior. Bradshaw et al. (2007) conducted a study on 109 schools with differences in location, size, teacher-student ratio, student race, and student socioeconomic status. The results showed that there is an overall trend in school bullying, that is, the risk of participation often increases in elementary schools, reaches a peak during middle school, and then decreases [45]. Pellegrini and Long (2002) found that younger students in schools are more often victimized than older students [46]. Borg (1999) conducted a national survey on the extent and nature of bullying with a sample of 6,282 students in Malta. The analysis found that older students may be more likely to be perpetrators of bullying compared with younger students [47].

In addition to the factors above, Koth (2008) found that gathering deviant children will change the atmosphere and norms of the school environment [48]. Children who are aggressive or have deviant behaviors will change social norms, making deviant behaviors acceptable within the group [49]. Therefore, a high concentration of students with aggressive behavior may disrupt the school environment and send signals to other students, causing frequent bullying behaviors. Moreover, in the school environment, a high turnover of students will disrupt the pace and predictability of the school and classroom environment. Highly mobile students often feel less connected to other students and the school and are more likely to participate in crime and bullying [50].

Teacher and Staff Perceptions of School Environment cannot be ignored as an important factor in predicting school bullying. Espelage et al. (2014) used 3,616 students from 36 middle schools in the midwestern United States as a sample to explore the relationship between teachers and staff's perception of the campus environment and school bullying with multi-informant, multilevel modeling, and other methods. The results show that when teachers and staff regard aggression as a problem of the school, the bullying behavior of students is more serious. When they are more committed to preventing bullying and establishing a positive teacher-student relationship, the bullying behavior will decrease. The school's commitment to preventing bullying is also associated with less bullying [51].

Although school bullying occurs on campus, it is also a social behavior, because bullying usually occurs in a group environment [52]. Therefore, special attention should be paid to the social factors of bullying. Mann et al. (2015) found that anomie was positively correlated with bullying behavior, and the decline in community closure and adherence to community values was associated with

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increased school bullying. Close connections between the community and the family will reduce the incidence of bullying [53].

3. Intervention of school bullying and future

In summary, we can see that school bullying is caused by many factors including personal, family, school, social environment, etc. It is a complex behavior. Therefore, the practice of intervention and prevention is also extremely complicated. Olweus once proposed the Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme which is composed of schools, classrooms, individuals and even communities. The specific measures are to allow adults to encourage and support young people, set an example for them, strictly limit bullying behavior, and formulate strict rules. In addition, even when the rules are broken, adults are also encouraged to use non-physical and nonhostile ways to influence them. In some evaluation studies in Norway, this method has decreased bullying behavior by 50%, but so far, it has not been so successful in other countries [54]. Salmivalli et al. (2006) created KiVa. The KiVa Anti-Bullying Project emphasizes that when bullying occurs, the reaction of bystanders is critical to the end and cessation of bullying. Therefore, the main purpose of the project is to affect the peer environment in the school environment. The project encourages higher-ranking students to provide support to the victimized child, rather than giving encouragement or acquiescence to the bully. KiVa's evaluation shows that this method has achieved considerable success in Finland. It has improved the emotional experience of students in the school environment, reduced unhealthy emotional experience among students, and reduced the incidence of bullying [55]. In addition, other countries also have sufficient intervention measures. Ttofi and Farrington (2011) analyzed 44 school-based international exhibition projects and found that these measures reduced bullying behavior by about 20-23% on average [56]. It is not difficult to find out that the intervention of school bullying has achieved certain success. Nevertheless, it is still frequent and cannot be ignored. Therefore, we still have a lot to understand about bullying. Future research should also focus on the motivation of bullying, more authoritative factors, and the effectiveness of specific interventions. A deep understanding of school bullying is more helpful to reduce school bullying behaviors, improve the learning and living environment of young people, and cultivate a sound mind and healthy personality.

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