

SHORT ARTICLE

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**PREVALENCE AND EFFECTS OF BULLYING IN A PRIVATE ENGINEERING  
COLLEGE**

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**Introduction**

Bullying is a willful, conscious desire to hurt another person of lesser strength and put him or her in stress. We say somebody is bullying when he or she hits, kicks, chokes you verbally or abuses (name calling, threatening, teasing, spreading nasty rumors) in a hurtful way .It is also bullying when one makes obscene gestures or intentionally isolates you and tries to keep others from being your friend. It is not bullying when two students of about same strength argue or fight.<sup>1</sup>

According to Oleus D<sup>2</sup> bullying is aggressive behavior that I) is intended to cause harm or distress II) occurs repeatedly over time III) occurs in a relationship in which there is imbalance of power or strength.

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The victim of bullying tend to lose self-esteem, becomes depressed and insecure. The accused may likely get engaged in antisocial behavior in adulthood<sup>3</sup>. So there is a need to counteract bullying at an early stage.

### **Objectives**

- I. To study the prevalence of bullying in a private engineering college.
- II. To study the short term effects of bullying .

### **Materials & Methods**

A cross-sectional anonymous questionnaire survey was undertaken in the month of July 2007 among students of a private engineering college with verbal and written explanation regarding bullying. After getting permission from the authority & consent from students data was collected.

All the 2nd & 3rd year students who were present on that day were included in the study. 1<sup>st</sup> year students could not be covered as admission for that session was not complete at the time of study. So a total of 225 students participated.

### **Observation**

25% of students experienced bullying in last 1 year. The persons involved in bullying were classmates(52%) followed by seniors (37%), teachers(5%) & other members(5%). In 47% of cases it was verbal abuse whereas physical abuse was reported only in 5%.

**Table I. Distribution of victims as per type of bullying:**

Type of bullying	Number	Percentage
Verbal	27	47
Threatening	12	20
Isolation	9	15

Forced to do something against their will	9	15
Loss of personal property	6	10
Physical	3	5
Others(spreading rumor)	3	5

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The frequency of bullying was about 1-10 times a year in 52%, about once in a month in 26% and more than once a week in 22% cases.

43% of victims experienced mental agony as an immediate consequence of bullying though physical pain was present only in 5% and 38% had low self-confidence.

Only 33% of victims reported the event to take some action against bullying. Out of which 71% conveyed the matter to their friends, 28.5% cases reported to their parents or any other family members whereas none of them reported to the authority. Out of those who didn't report, 33% tried to solve the problem at their own level, 27% thought the matter was not that serious to be reported whereas 17% were afraid of worsening of the situation by reporting.

The reason for being bullied was unusual physical expression (20%), jealousy (5%), not going to tuition (5%), 31% did not reveal the cause & reason was not known in 39%. Five percentage of the students who have experienced bullying have themselves bullied other friends & juniors in order to have fun.

Different suggestions given by the victims to prevent bullying are enforcement of law (50%), information to the authority (20%), ignorance of the fact (10% and psychotherapy (5%).

### **Discussion**

Prevalence of bullying noted in our study was 25%. Although actual physical hurt was reported by only a minority of students (5%), it should be remembered that even non-physical forms of bullying also lead to harmful effects. It is worrying that severe forms of bullying

such as being verbally abused, being isolated and spreading of rumors were reported by 67% students.

Bullying is associated with several short-term and long-term consequences. Victims, especially if bullying is frequent and severe, frequently abstain themselves from the college, have lower self-esteem, lack confidence, are low achievers affecting their college performance and report several psychosomatic illnesses<sup>4,5,7</sup>. They are lonely and have fewer friends and consider themselves as less competent. It can also impact their abilities to form relationships in adult life<sup>2</sup>. In this study 42% suffered from mental agony and 38% had low self confidence.

This study has also shown that most victims of bullying do not report the incidence to parents and college authority and this takes away some important sources of support.

### **Conclusion**

As the prevalence of bullying is high among adolescents, the authority should address them at its outset.

Anonymous letterbox approach should be tried to overcome fear of the students regarding worsening of the situation by reporting. A committee involving some faculties and a few students should be formed to address the grievances of victims impartially and also to make student aware that bullying is a punishable offence.

Parents can be given information regarding inappropriate behavior of their children . Parents' meeting can be arranged to improve parenting skills in order to have a positive social behavior including development of a strong value system that considers bullying unacceptable.

The victims of bullying are at more risk of having anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation<sup>7</sup>. Doctors, teachers & parents should be made aware of these associations so that

they will be able to identify possible-warning signs at an early stage to avoid immediate & potential long-term effects of bullying.

Studies on bullying and the factors influencing it should be encouraged in Indian scenario where the data regarding its prevalence is lacking.

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