**Gendered Effects of School-Aged Bullying on Emerging Adulthood**

**Kristin Ziehl & Eliza Smith, Dr. Susan Wolfram, University of Wisconsin-Stout**

**Research Question & Hypotheses**

What are the gendered effects of school-aged bullying on emerging adulthood?

This study had three hypotheses: (1) females would suffer more severe consequences as a result of bullying; (2) males would be more likely to experience physical bullying; and (3) females would be more likely to experience all other forms of bullying with relational bullying being the most common form experienced.

**Purpose**

1. Examine the relationship between the effects of school-aged bullying on emerging adulthood with a sample including both males and females in order to compare groups.
2. Develop a reliable survey instrument which measures emerging adult perceptions of the personal consequences of having been bullied during the school-aged years.
3. Increase the awareness of how bullying during the school-age years affects individuals over the lifespan, most notably during emerging adulthood.

**Theoretical Framework**

Erik Erikson’s Psychosocial Development Theory claims that bullying at a young age would lead to poor management of the Industry versus Inferiority stage for both males and females. Due to this mismanagement, an individual would then face negative consequences during emerging adulthood as they struggle with future stage conflicts.

**Literature Review**

Adams & Lawrence (2011) supported that there are profound, negative consequences associated with being bullied that perpetuate into the college years.

Dempsey & Storch (2008) found that recalled relational victimization was related to increased symptoms of depression and social anxiety.

Klomek, Sourander, & Gould (2010) indicated that bullying behavior and cyber bullying were associated with increased risks of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts. This association varies by sex.

Miller & Vaillancourt (2007) supported that recalled indirect peer victimization was a predictor of self-oriented perfectionism. Recalled direct (physical/verbal) victimization held no relation.

Segrin, Nevaraz, Arroyo, & Harwood (2012) found that parental loneliness and history of being bullied were each significant predictors of young adult loneliness as well as indirect effects through reduced social skills.

**Method**

» Participants
- 75 male and female students from a university in northwestern Wisconsin
- After eliminating non-bullied participants, the final analysis consisted of 25 individuals who had been bullied during their school-aged years.

» Research Design
- Non-random pilot study
- Cross sectional
- Purposive sampling design
- Snowball sampling design

» Data collection Instrument
- IRB approved, informed by literature & theory, implied consent
- Self administered surveys with one independent variable, three demographic variables, ten closed ended statements based on a 1-6 Likert Scale, and three open ended statements.

» Procedure
- Administered questionnaires to male and female college students in two science courses and one mathematics course offered by the university.
- Explained implied consent and confidentiality

» Data Analysis Plan
- Cleared & coded surveys
- Analyzed data using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)
  - Cross tabulations, mean comparisons, and a reliability analysis: Cronbach’s Alpha

**Variables**

» Independent Variable
- GEN (Gender)

» Dependent Variables
- LCP (I often feel a lack of companionship)
- FDP (Most days I feel sad or depressed)
- FLF (I often feel lonely)
- LSE (I have low self-esteem)
- FIS (I often feel isolated)
- SPF (I often strive to be perfect so my peers don’t reject me)
- PHT (My peers hit, kicked, pushed, or shoved me around)
- CNM (I was bullied, or teased in a hurtful way)
- EFD (I was excluded from different groups of friends on purpose)
- WOL (I was bullied online through social networks)

**Results Summary**

Hypothesis #3: Mixed support. Found that females feel a more intense lack of companionship (LCP) during emerging adulthood when compared to males. Males have more powerful feelings of isolation (FIS) during emerging adulthood due to bullying during the school-aged years.

Hypothesis #2: Did not find support for this hypothesis because there was no variance between genders when comparing the factor for physical bullying (PHT).

Hypothesis #3: Mixed support. Females experienced more intense relational bullying (EFD) and cyberbullying (WOL) than males. Relational bullying (EFD) was the most reported type of bullying for females. Remaining variable (CNM) did not result in a difference between genders.

Reliability Analysis: Cronbach’s Alpha measures reliability and our survey items measured 0.811.

**Implications for Future Research**

Future research would benefit greatly from: a large national, randomized sample; broadening the age range of this study; examining this research problem longitudinally; exploring the evolution of these effects throughout the lifespan of an individual; and by conducting a global study that would incorporate diverse cultures.

**Conclusion**

Our research took one small step within our field to provide more data on whether or not a gender difference exists between the effects of school-aged bullying and emerging adulthood. The mixed support for our hypotheses leads us to believe that this is a complex, multifaceted issue that needs to be scrutinized from countless more angles and viewpoints.

In order for a more clear view of this subject to be established, a mixed methods approach of both qualitative and quantitative data would be most useful. The addition of qualitative responses would enhance the understanding of this issue as the authenticity of the participant’s lived experiences would provide more insight into the effects of bullying. In addition to the need for education and prevention when it comes to bullying, bystander intervention must become a priority as well. Bullying is an issue that will continue to spread maliciously until our society choose to take a stand against the victimization of others.

“Bullying is a hard thing to fight...it’s going to happen no matter what because some kids feel they need to be better than others.
The part that will change is the people that stand up against the bullies.” — Anonymous Participant