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Influence of bullied status on academic achievement of higher primary students

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Abstract

Bullying is recognized as a major issue in school environments that can influence students' emotional well-being and academic outcomes. The present study aimed to examine the relationship between bullied status and academic achievement among higher primary school students. The investigation was conducted among 240 students studying in 5th to 7th standard in selected English medium private schools located in Dharwad and Mudhol taluks of Karnataka state. Information was gathered using a self-structured questionnaire along with the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (1996) to assess bullied status, while students' academic performance was evaluated using their previous academic grades. The results indicated that a larger proportion of students in Dharwad belonged to the non-bullied and moderately bullied categories, whereas severe bullying was relatively higher among students in Mudhol. In terms of academic achievement, most students in Dharwad showed lower academic performance, while students in Mudhol demonstrated comparatively better academic achievement. The findings also revealed that students with lower grades were more frequently associated with moderate bullying, whereas students with higher academic performance were commonly found in the non-bullied group. These results highlight the importance of addressing bullying behaviour in schools to support both students' academic development and psychological well-being.

Keywords: Bullying, academic achievement

Introduction

Bullying has become a major concern in educational institutions as it affects the social, emotional and academic development of school children. It generally refers to repeated aggressive behaviour where one student intentionally harms or intimidates another student who is perceived to be less powerful. Such behaviour may occur in different forms including physical aggression, verbal harassment and social exclusion.

Olweus (1994)^[19] described bullying as a situation in which a student is repeatedly exposed to negative actions carried out by one or more peers over a period of time. These actions may involve teasing, threatening, spreading rumours or intentionally excluding an individual from social activities. Experiences of bullying can lead to several negative consequences such as emotional distress, anxiety and reduced participation in school activities.

Academic achievement refers to the level of performance attained by students in educational settings and is commonly measured through grades or standardized examinations. It reflects how effectively students are able to meet educational goals and learning outcomes established by schools.

Previous research has shown that bullying experiences can negatively influence students' academic performance. Delprato *et al.* (2017)^[5] reported that victimization in schools can disrupt students' learning processes and reduce their academic engagement. Similarly, Huang (2022)^[10] indicated that bullying may affect students' sense of belonging in school, which ultimately influences their

academic progress. Therefore, examining the relationship between bullying and academic achievement is essential for understanding its impact on students' educational outcomes.

Materials and Methodology

The present investigation was carried out among higher primary school students aged between 11 and 13 years who were studying in grades 5 to 7 in selected schools of Dharwad and Mudhol taluks of Karnataka state.

A total sample of 240 students was selected for the study. Information about the schools was obtained from the respective Block Education Offices. From the list of available schools, two institutions were selected for data collection and students from these schools were included in the sample.

Prior to the data collection process, necessary permission and informed consent were obtained from the concerned authorities. Background information about students was collected using a self-structured questionnaire. The bullied status of students was measured using the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (1996)^[19]. Academic achievement was assessed using students' previous academic grades obtained from school records. The collected data were analysed using SPSS software (version 26) to obtain descriptive statistics and to examine the relationship between bullied status and academic achievement.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the distribution of students according to

their individual characteristics in Dharwad and Mudhol. With respect to gender, equal proportions of male and female students were included in the sample in both locations, accounting for 25 per cent each. Similar proportions were observed among students from Mudhol. Regarding class distribution, 16.70 per cent of students belonged to 5th standard, 6th standard and 7th standard respectively in Dharwad. The same pattern of distribution was also observed among students in Mudhol.

Table 1: Distribution of students by individual characteristics of Dharwad and Mudhol students (N = 240)

Characteristics	Category	Dharwad (n=120)	Mudhol (n=120)
Gender	Male	60 (25.0)	60 (25.0)
	Female	60 (25.0)	60 (25.0)
Class	5 th std	40 (16.7)	40 (16.7)
	6 th std	40 (16.7)	40 (16.7)
	7 th std	40 (16.7)	40 (16.7)

Table 2 illustrates the parental characteristics of students from Dharwad and Mudhol. In Dharwad, most mothers had completed graduation or post-graduation (18.80%), followed by professional qualifications with technical degrees (15.10%). A smaller proportion had completed education up to 10th standard but less than graduation (11.70%), while only a few mothers were illiterate or had education below 10th standard (4.60%).

In Mudhol, the largest proportion of mothers possessed professional qualifications with technical degrees (14.60%), followed by graduation or post-graduation (14.20%). A considerable number of mothers were illiterate or had education below 10th standard (11.30%), while the least proportion had education up to 10th standard but below graduation (10%).

Similar findings were reported by Fadia *et al.* (2016), who stated that parental education plays an important role in influencing children's behaviour and their experiences related to bullying.

Table 2: Distribution of students by Parental characteristics of Dharwad and Mudhol (N=240)

Variables	Categories	Dharwad (n= 120)	Mudhol (n = 120)
Education of mother	Illiterate and < 10th pass	11(4.6)	27(11.3)
	10th class pass but < Graduation	28(11.7)	24(10.0)
	Graduation and Post-graduation	45(18.8)	34(14.2)
	Professional qualification with technical degree or diploma (e.g. Doctor, Eng., CA, MBA)	36(15.0)	35(14.6)
Education of father	Illiterate and < 10th pass	27(11.3)	11(4.6)
	10th class pass but < Graduation	24(10.0)	28(11.7)
	Graduation and Post-graduation	34(14.2)	45(18.8)
	Professional qualification with technical degree or diploma (e.g. Doctor, Eng, CA, MBA)	35(14.6)	36(15.0)
Occupation of mother	Income < Rs. 5,000 (laborer, housewife)	17(7.1)	17(7.1)
	Self-employed with income > Rs. 5,000 (shops, petty business)	26(10.8)	27(11.3)
	Service at shops transport, own cultivation of land	23(9.6)	28(11.7)
	Service in private sector or independent business (employing 2-20 persons)	28(11.7)	25(10.4)
	Service in central/state/public sector	26(10.8)	23(9.6)
Occupation of father	Income < Rs. 5,000 (labourer, housewife)	17(7.1)	17(7.1)
	Self-employed with income > Rs. 5,000 (shops, petty business)	28(11.7)	25(10.4)

Table 3 describes the family characteristics of students in the study area. In Dharwad, the majority of students belonged to nuclear families (28.0%), followed by joint families (22.0%). In contrast, among students from Mudhol, a larger proportion belonged to joint families (26.30%), while fewer students belonged to nuclear families (23.80%). With regard to socio-economic status, most students in Dharwad were from high socio-economic backgrounds (22.0%), followed by middle socio-economic status

(19.10%) and poor socio-economic status (9.10%). In Mudhol, a greater proportion of students belonged to the middle socio-economic category (20.80%), followed by high socio-economic status (18.80%) and poor socio-economic status (10.40%). These findings are consistent with Neil *et al.* (2014), who reported that socio-economic background may influence children's vulnerability to bullying experiences.

Table 3: Distribution of students by family characteristics of Dharwad and Mudhol (N=240)

Variables	Categories	Dharwad (n= 120)	Mudhol (n = 120)
Family type	Joint	55(22.0)	63(26.3)
	Nuclear	67(28.0)	57(23.8)
Socio economic status	High	52(22.0)	45(18.8)
	Middle	46(19.1)	50(20.8)
	Poor	22(9.1)	25(10.4)

Table 4 presents the distribution of bullied status among students in Dharwad and Mudhol. In Dharwad, most students belonged to the not bullied and moderately bullied categories (35%), while 30 per cent experienced severe

bullying. In Mudhol, a comparatively larger proportion of students were categorized under severe bullying (36.7%), followed by not bullied and moderately bullied groups (31.7%).

Table 4: Distribution of students by Bullied Status of Dharwad and Mudhol (N=240)

Locality	Bullied status			
	Not	Moderate	Severe	Total
Dharwad	42(35)	42(35)	36(30)	120(100)
Mudhol	38(31.7)	38(31.7)	44(36.7)	120(100)

Table 5: Distribution of students by Academic achievement of Dharwad and Mudhol (N=240)

Locality	Academic Achievement		
	High academic achievement	Low academic achievement	Total
Dharwad	50(41.6)	70(58.3)	120(100)

Table 6 depicts the association between academic achievement and bullied status among students. In Dharwad, students with low academic grades were more frequently observed in the not bullied and severe bullied categories (35.7%), followed by the moderate bullied category (28.6%). Students with higher grades were mainly found in the severe bullied group (38%), followed by the moderate bullied category (36%) and not bullied group (26%). In Mudhol, students with low academic grades were

Table 5 shows the academic achievement of students in Dharwad and Mudhol. In Dharwad, a majority of students had low academic achievement (58.30%), whereas 41.60 per cent demonstrated high academic achievement. On the other hand, in Mudhol most students showed high academic achievement (55.80%), while 44.10 per cent had low academic performance.

predominantly found in the moderately bullied category (41.50%), followed by not bullied (30.20%) and severe bullied groups (28.30%). Students with higher grades were mostly categorized under the not bullied group (38.80%), followed by severe bullying (31.30%) and moderate bullying (29.90%).

These findings indicate that bullying experiences may influence students' academic performance and learning engagement.

Table 6: Association and comparison of students by academic achievement and bullied status among Dharwad and Mudhol (N=240)

Locality	Academic achievement	Bullied status			Total	χ^2 value	Mean± SD	F -value
		Not Bullied	Moderate Bullied	Severe Bullied				
Dharwad	Low grades	25(35.7)	20(28.6)	25(35.7)	70(100)	1.419*	83.03±24.883	0.86NS
	High grades	13(26.0)	18(36.0)	19(38.0)	50(100)		83.07±24.897	
Mudhol	Low grades	16(30.2)	22(41.5)	15(28.3)	53(100)	1.868*	79.47±28.269	0.36*
	High grades	26(38.8)	20(29.9)	21(31.3)	67(100)		78.52±25.315	

Conclusion

The findings of the present study indicate that bullying is prevalent among higher primary school students and may influence their academic performance. In Dharwad, a larger proportion of students belonged to the non-bullied and moderately bullied categories, whereas in Mudhol a relatively higher percentage of students experienced severe bullying. With respect to academic achievement, most students in Dharwad demonstrated lower academic performance, while a higher proportion of students in Mudhol showed better academic achievement. The analysis also revealed that students with lower academic grades were more frequently associated with moderate levels of bullying, whereas students with higher grades were more commonly found in the non-bullied group. These results suggest that bullying experiences can affect students' academic engagement and learning outcomes. Therefore, it is important for schools to implement effective anti-bullying strategies and supportive learning environments that promote both students' academic success and psychological well-being.

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