

Research on Multidimensional Causation Analysis and Early Identification and Warning of School Bullying

Yaoting Zhang^{1,a*}, Yixuan Zhang^{2,b}, Jinhuan Ma^{1,c}

¹School of Education Science, Xinyang Normal University, Xinyang, 464000, Henan, China

²Renmin Hospital of Wuhan University, Wuhan, 430060, Hubei, China

^a15939716648@163.com, ^byunmo_0809@qq.com, ^cjinhuan19@126.com

*Corresponding author

Abstract: School bullying, as a social phenomenon that endangers the physical and mental health of adolescents, arises from the complex interplay of individual, family, school, and societal factors. Findings indicate that negative family parenting styles are a primary contributing factor, while structural biases within the school education system further exacerbate the risk. The infiltration of violent culture and the transmission of pathological values in society lead adolescents to develop a "normalization of violence" mindset. Individual psychological traits, coupled with the "strength worship" logic embedded in peer subcultures, constitute intrinsic drivers and group-level catalysts for bullying behavior. Early identification should prioritize behavioral manifestations such as persistent verbal attacks, intentional physical aggression, and structural relational exclusion, as well as psychological and physiological indicators including anxiety, depression, sudden academic decline, and changes in toileting behavior. The core lies in capturing early warning signs through multi-agent observation and multidimensional assessment.

Keywords: School bullying; Causation; Early identification

1. Introduction

School bullying not only inflicts indelible trauma on victims but also acts as a corrosive force undermining the harmonious school environment, negatively affecting educational outcomes and social stability. Therefore, it is essential to conduct in-depth research on school bullying, detect its early signs, and establish a comprehensive prevention system. Early screening functions as a "safety sentinel" within schools, sensitively identifying at-risk students and providing timely support to prevent further harm. Thus, exploring the causes of school bullying and recognizing its early indicators are of paramount importance.

2. Types of School Bullying

School bullying manifests in various forms, each posing serious harm. Physical bullying, through violent acts such as beating, directly damages victims' physical health—resulting in injuries like bruises and fractures—while also creating long-term psychological trauma that affects learning and development. Its etiology is multifactorial, involving familial, educational, and societal dimensions. Verbal bullying, expressed through insults and sarcasm, stems from adverse influences of individual psychology, family atmosphere, school education, and social media; its prevention requires coordinated efforts from family, school, and society. Social bullying isolates and excludes victims, severely impairing interpersonal relationships and mental health, and necessitates a collaborative mechanism among family, school, and community systems for resolution. Cyberbullying, leveraging various online platforms, spreads rapidly, has wide reach, and is highly anonymous, imposing immense psychological pressure on victims and potentially triggering extreme behaviors. Its prevention and control demand joint action from family, school, society, and online platforms.

Additionally, gender-based violence in schools employs gender-specific violent means, causing serious physical and mental harm through multiple forms of victimization. Material bullying, through illegal seizure or destruction of property, inflicts both material loss and psychological damage, calling

for an intervention system built across family, school, and societal levels. Cultural bullying, based on cultural identity differences and involving belittling and mocking, leads to spiritual oppression, affecting victims' mental health and campus cultural harmony. Strengthening defenses requires collaborative efforts in family education, school policy development, and responsible social media dissemination.

3. Multidimensional Causation Analysis of School Bullying

School bullying shows a trend toward greater concealment and complexity^[1]. It is a complex outcome of interactions among individual psychology, family ecology, school education, and social culture. Its causes can be systematically deconstructed from the micro to the macro level.

3.1 Negative Impact of Family Parenting Styles

The family, as the primary setting for individual socialization, fundamentally shapes children's behavioral patterns. Families lacking emotional support and characterized by emotional coldness can lead to affective empathy deficits in children, manifesting as a dulled response to others' suffering. Conversely, permissive parenting that overly indulges children fosters egocentrism, causing children to lack a sense of boundaries and mistakenly view "dominating others" as normal social interaction. Family violence is a significant risk factor for victimization^[2]. Authoritarian parenting methods—such as physical punishment and scolding—essentially convey the erroneous message that "violence is an acceptable means to solve problems." Children from such families are likely to externalize the suppression and anger experienced at home into aggressive behavior at school, perpetuating a cycle of victimization and aggression. Alternatively, they may seek a distorted sense of existence and control through bullying others due to long-term lack of positive attention.

3.2 Structural Deviations in the School Education System

The marginalization of moral and mental health education is a key issue. The one-sided pursuit of academic achievement has led to moral education becoming a mere formality, with students lacking a deep understanding of the value of life and social responsibility. The weakness of mental health education means that potential psychological problems cannot be addressed early. Some students, lacking emotional regulation skills, choose to vent stress and resolve conflicts through bullying. Furthermore, the functional failure of conflict resolution mechanisms is evident. Schools without a systematic anti-bullying intervention process often respond to bullying at the level of reactive disciplinary measures, failing to establish effective deterrence. At the same time, an authoritarian teacher-student interaction model suppresses students' willingness to seek help actively, allowing conflicts to accumulate and escalate. A competitive evaluation system prone to forming hierarchical labels enables some students to consolidate advantageous positions by bullying "marginalized groups," fostering a negative peer interaction subculture.

3.3 Negative Shaping of the Social and Cultural Environment

The core challenge in preventing school bullying lies in the shaping and guidance of values^[3]. Negative factors in the social environment constitute important inducing conditions, mainly manifested in the infiltration of violent culture and the deviation of value orientation. In the contemporary media landscape, some films, television shows, and video games contain high-frequency violent scenes. Their visual impact and plot design have a potential influence on adolescents' cognitive development. During a critical period of psychological development, adolescents—whose social cognitive abilities are not yet mature and who lack critical interpretation skills for media content—may develop distorted cognitive schemas through prolonged exposure. This can lead to the erroneous perception that "violence is normal"—that is, viewing aggressive behavior as an effective means to resolve conflicts and even equating violent displays with personal strength. Through mechanisms of observational learning and desensitization, these media contents subtly influence the construction of adolescents' behavioral patterns, making them more likely to imitate media violence in campus interactions, thereby inducing bullying behavior.

3.4 Influence of Individual Psychological Traits

Individual psychological differences play a key role in the occurrence of school bullying. The root of

such behavior lies in distorted social and value concepts among a minority of adolescents, who may disregard legal norms^[4]. Individuals with impulsive personality traits exhibit insufficient emotional regulation and weak behavioral control, making them prone to extreme aggressive responses over minor conflicts. Trait-based empathy deficits are also a significant factor: some bullies have affective empathy impairments, making it difficult for them to resonate with others' suffering. This lack of empathy leads to disregard for victims' psychological states, resulting in behavior that lacks moral constraints.

3.5 Negative Influence of Peer Subculture

Interaction patterns within small groups in the campus peer network often serve as catalytic factors for bullying behavior. Adolescents, whose minds are not yet fully mature, are easily influenced by negative trends and may mistakenly believe that bullying others demonstrates their abilities^[5]. In exclusive peer subcultures, some groups develop value criteria centered on "strength worship" and "survival of the fittest," rationalizing and even glorifying aggressive behavior as symbols of "bravery" and "authority." Within such groups, individuals may lose independent judgment due to the deindividuation effect and actively engage in or support bullying behavior to gain group acceptance, leading to "conformist bullying." Enhancing individual awareness and resisting conformist pressure are important strategies for effectively preventing hidden bullying^[6]. The negative influence of peer subculture essentially reflects adolescents' pathological pursuit of group belonging during socialization and the lack of positive guidance from mainstream campus culture for healthy peer interactions.

4. Early Identification and Warning of School Bullying

As a significant social issue endangering adolescents' physical and mental health, school bullying presents early manifestations with distinct behavioral and psychological indicators. Systematically identifying the initial characteristics of bullying behavior provides a crucial basis for constructing preventive intervention systems.

4.1 Persistent Verbal Attacks

Verbal attacks are one of the most typical early signs of school bullying, primarily characterized by insulting and degrading language. Bullies often target victims' physical features (e.g., "ugly," "odd body shape"), academic performance, or family background with continuous verbal offenses. Their language is both targeted and harmful. Such behavior can manifest as direct humiliation in public or through rumor-spreading and negative evaluations in private, creating psychological pressure that may contribute to internalizing disorders such as depression and social anxiety. Students experiencing long-term verbal attacks may develop distorted self-identity, manifesting as low self-esteem and social withdrawal. Immediate intervention mechanisms should be established to cultivate students' language civility and empathy through moral education and emotional guidance, curbing the breeding ground for verbal violence.

4.2 Intentional Physical Invasions

From a violence typology perspective, physical invasions can be deconstructed into levels: the first level involves direct physical aggression, such as instrumental physical aggression, targeted shoving, and intentional setting of physical barriers. The second level extends to material violence involving systematic destruction of learning tools and symbolic property damage. The consequences of such violence not only cause immediate physical injury but also trigger functional disturbances in victims' spatial perception systems, leading to increased avoidance behaviors in the school environment and significantly reduced educational engagement. Governance strategies require a three-tier response mechanism: establishing a multimodal monitoring system based on movement trajectory analysis, developing a digital reporting platform for teacher-student collaborative early warning, and implementing composite intervention modules that include behavioral correction and cognitive restructuring.

4.3 Abnormal Emotional State Indicators

In bullying relationships, the emotional manifestations of involved students show bidirectional abnormalities. Victims often exhibit negative emotions such as anxiety, fear, and depression,

accompanied by functional impairments like decreased learning efficiency and distracted attention; some may experience somatic symptoms such as headaches and stomachaches. Bullies, on the other hand, frequently display affective flattening and lack of empathy, showing little compassion for victims' suffering and even deriving a distorted sense of control and superiority from the bullying behavior, forming an erroneous cognitive pattern of "using violence to counter violence". By observing sudden changes in students' emotional states combined with academic performance and social behavior anomalies, early warning signals can be established. School psychologists should intervene to provide individual counseling, conducting psychological trauma interventions for victims and cognitive-behavioral restructuring for bullies, severing the psychological drive for bullying behavior at the emotional education level.

4.4 Help-Seeking Signals in Children

Anxiety and tension in children intensify when they are bullied. For bullied children, daily commuting to and from school becomes a harsh ordeal, as they fear encountering malicious treatment along the way. Therefore, when children ask, "Can you take me to or pick me up from school?" it is crucial to pay attention. Such implicit help-seeking behaviors should be interpreted as potential indicators of victimization. Parents must not ignore these signals; they should patiently listen to their children, provide sufficient security and support, and help them bravely face bullying, rebuilding their confidence and love for school life. At the same time, schools and society should strengthen supervision and punishment of bullying behavior, creating a safe and harmonious environment for children's growth.

4.5 Sudden School Refusal

If a child who has always performed well academically and behaviorally suddenly becomes extremely averse to going to school—even stubbornly refusing to attend—parents must be highly alert. This acute school refusal is not ordinary; it is highly likely that the child is suffering from school bullying. Filled with fear and pain, they may not dare to reveal the truth to their parents due to threats from bullies or other reasons. Early parental intervention has irreplaceable therapeutic value. Proactive investigation is not only a manifestation of responsibility but also a way to demonstrate through action the value of facing problems and intervening in harm, breaking the vicious cycle of "victim silence–perpetrator indulgence" in bullying incidents.

4.6 Marked Inferiority Feelings and Somatic Warning Signs

Bullied children often exhibit significant signs of timidity and inferiority, characterized by excessive caution in school settings—such as deliberately avoiding speaking up or participating in group activities—and even experiencing physiological anxiety reactions. Some parents may mistakenly attribute these symptoms to "school aversion" or "feigning illness," overlooking the potential that the child is a victim of bullying. In fact, children suffering long-term verbal humiliation and social isolation often fall into a "silence–fear" cycle due to threats from bullies, internalizing their pain as self-denial and leading to a sharp drop in self-esteem. When children exhibit co-occurring non-organic physical discomfort and low mood, it is necessary to be vigilant about their somatic expression as a manifestation of psychological distress—essentially a compensatory response through the physiological system, indicating that the individual is in a state of continuous stress.

5. Conclusion

The governance of school bullying is a systematic and arduous project, interwoven with individual psychology, family environment, school education, and social culture. Deviations in family parenting styles, structural issues in the school education system, infiltration of negative social culture, and the influence of individual psychological traits and peer subcultures together form the breeding ground for school bullying. Early identification, as a key link in prevention and intervention, requires a multifaceted approach, capturing subtle signals from behavioral manifestations, emotional states, and academic changes to intervene in a timely manner. However, current research and practice still have shortcomings. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to examine the interplay of causal factors and validate early-warning indicators, as well as promote collaborative governance among families, schools, and society. Building a comprehensive, multi-level prevention and control system for school bullying is essential to create a safe and healthy growth environment for adolescents.

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