



Impacts on Victims of School Bullying and Their Adaptation Strategies Afterwards

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Abstract. In recent years, school bullying incidents have been emerging and have attracted more and more attention. School bullying has great harm to the bullied both mentally and physically, and many of the bullied suffer from psychological and social maladaptation problems afterward. This study selects 20 college students who have already got out of the negative effects of school bullying as interviewees, and conducts open coding, main axis coding and selective coding on the data. It mainly discusses the difficulties faced by the bullied and the mental adaptation strategies after being bullied, as well as the specific process of social adaptation, and puts forward relevant suggestions to help the bullied to adapt to life correctly and develop new interpersonal relationships.

Keywords: School Bullying · School Psychology · Mental Adaptation Strategy · Social Adaptation Strategy

1 Introduction

School bullying incidents in China have occurred frequently, and bullying-related videos in school or among classmates have been circulated on major social platforms, making school bullying incidents more and more people's attention nowadays.

1.1 Definition of School Bullying

Olweus (1993) believes that school bullying refers to the verbal abuse, threats, ridicule, teasing, etc., as well as physical kicking, scratching, extortion, robbing of property and other negative behaviors of a classmate for a period of time [1]. Negative behavior refers to intentionally hurting others, or Behavior that causes discomfort to the other person. Some scholars have classified bullying and divided school bullying into direct physical bullying, direct verbal bullying, and indirect bullying (such as bullying others with the help of others, making rumors behind their backs, speaking badly, creating public opinion, etc.) (Olweus, 1993; Rivers and Smith, 1994) [1, 2].

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In April 2016, China officially issued the “Notice on Carrying out the Special Governance of School Bullying”. The Office of the State Council Education Steering Committee hereby identifies the concept of school bullying as it occurred among students, deliberately or maliciously carried out bullying, insulting and causing harm by means of body, language and network. This is the first time that relevant departments in our country have a clear definition of school bullying, and based on verbal and physical bullying, the concept of cyberbullying has been added.

1.2 Incentives for School Bullying

The incentives for individuals to be bullied are very complex and can be simply divided into external factors and individual factors, such as the external school environment, parenting methods, the active provocation of the bully, and the personality of the individual being bullied. The research of Han Lei et al. shows that an important variable predicting an individual’s bullying is the degree of “shyness”, and the shy individual is more vulnerable to bullying and attack (Han Lei et al., 2016) [3]. Personality traits are inherent susceptibility factors for individuals to experience bullying (Sentse et al., 2015) [4]. It is worth mentioning that parenting style is a factor that cannot be ignored when individuals are bullied. Parenting styles that encourage positive parenting styles such as autonomy and caring significantly negatively correlate with children being bullied. Negative parenting styles such as excessive preference are positively correlated with children being bullied (Huang, 2020) [5]. It can be seen that in addition to personal personality factors, many external factors are also the reasons for school bullying. Therefore, while strengthening school safety education, it is also very important to create a harmonious school atmosphere and for parents to cultivate their children with more positive parenting methods.

1.3 Mental Adaptation of the Victims

School bullying has a huge impact on the victim, both mentally and physically. After being bullied, individuals will be marginalized by their peers and forced to withdraw from mainstream social groups, resulting in severe psychological maladaptation. Those who are bullied will have severe depression, anxiety, loneliness, and other emotional maladaptive problems, as well as behavioral maladaptive problems such as aggression, rejection of peers, and social refusal (Ji Linqin et al., 2011) [6]. Relevant studies at home and abroad have found that most bullied people do not take the initiative to seek help from others (such as parents, teachers, etc.), but choose the unhealthy way of silently enduring and forbearing (Chen et al., 2013) [7], which will lead to bullying - The vicious cycle of being bullied. Helping the bullied to master good adaptation strategies is an important prerequisite for breaking out of this vicious circle, adjusting to life correctly, and developing new interpersonal relationships.

At present, there are many studies on how to prevent school bullying, but there are few studies on how to better adapt to life after being bullied. This research aims to study the difficulties faced by bullies and their social adaptation strategies from the perspective of subject constructivism by interviewing college students who have come out of bullying in schools and make relevant recommendations.

2 Research Method

2.1 Research Objects

This study adopts the purpose sampling method to interview college students who have suffered from campus bullying and think they have basically got rid of the negative effects of bullying.

Inclusion criteria: ① Interviewees should have experienced school bullying. ② Interviewees should think that they have basically got rid of the negative effects of bullying. ③ Aged from 18 to 26 years old. ④ Interviewees should be undergraduates. ⑤ Interviewees should give informed consent to participate in this study.

2.2 Introduction of the Research Method

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to collect data in this qualitative study. Each interview lasted approximately 60–80 min, as agreed upon by the interviewees and in accordance with the principle of confidentiality. OSR Nvivo 12.0 was used to complete the data analysis, and the encoding process followed the grounded theory method.

2.3 Introduction of Sample Sizes

See Table 1.

3 Results

3.1 Data Analysis

Data analysis was done with OSR Nvivo 12.0, and the coding process followed the grounded theory approach. The first step of open coding is based on the “situation during the bullying period” and “the situation after being bullied” as the core, to identify, emphasize and express meaningful units, and give conceptual names until the theory is saturated. The analysis process was completed by a coder, and the transcripts were about 200,000 words, resulting in 198 and 284 reference points, respectively, and 19 topic-related concepts. In the second main axis coding, the internal relationship between these categories is clarified and sorted out. Through continuous comparison, the meanings contained in the related concepts of these themes are further extracted, and 4 and 3 related topics are obtained respectively. The third step, selective coding, aims to establish a theoretical system with internal consistency. On the basis of existing concepts, select or refine a core category that can best cover all categories and phenomena to serve as research ideas and clues, and then form a general theory and explanation. Finally, the coders checked the coding process and coding naming to ensure that the concepts correspond closely to the original data, and that there is a systematic connection between concepts, so as to ensure that the theory reaches conceptual saturation.

Table 1. The sample sizes

Number	Gender	Age	Education Level	Region
P1	Female	22	Undergraduate	Beijing
P2	Male	21	Undergraduate	Shandong + Beijing
P3	Female	21	Undergraduate	Sichuan
P4	Male	18	Undergraduate	Beijing
P5	Female	21	Undergraduate	Beijing
P6	Female	22	Undergraduate	Anhui
P7	Female	21	Undergraduate	Tianjin + Beijing
P8	Male	21	Undergraduate	Changsha + Beijing
P9	Female	26	Undergraduate	North China
P10	Female	21	Undergraduate	Tibet
P11	Female	24	Undergraduate	Beijing
P12	Female	20	Undergraduate	Inner Mongolia
P13	Female	20	Undergraduate	Guangdong
P14	Male	26	Undergraduate	Shandong
P15	Male	21	Undergraduate	Changsha
P16	Female	20	Undergraduate	Tianjin
P17	Female	22	Undergraduate	Jiangxi
P18	Male	20	Undergraduate	Beijing
P19	Male	23	Undergraduate	Beijing
P20	Male	22	Undergraduate	Beijing

3.2 Coding Results

3.2.1 The Situation During the Bullying Period

See Table 2.

3.2.2 Post-bullying Situation

See Table 3.

Table 2. The coding results of the situation during the bullying period

core category	selective encoding	spindle coding	open coding	reference point
the situation in the period of being bullied	the way of being bullied	isolation	Then she let all the girls in the class isolate me; The teacher led the class to isolate me	41
		verbal aggression	They were facetious and gave me an ugly nickname; The gossips had been widespread; appearance and body humiliation	40
		body attack	He slapped me a lot unilaterally; He took out a knife.	13
		verbal threat	He said if I didn't do it, he wouldn't play with me.	11
		start a rumour	They said that I was in several situationships with different guys; They said that I had seduced a bunch of men	7
		carrot and stick approach (similar to PUA)	But sometimes he was very nice to me, I feel awkward	5
	mischievousness	They put the smashed tomatoes in my schoolbag	4	
when bullying took place	junior high	From Grade One to Grade Three; So I was sent to another school after the second year	8	

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

core category	selective encoding	spindle coding	open coding	reference point
		senior high	Senior three; It was when I got into high school after I had moved from Beijing to Tianjin	5
		primary school	Probably in the five or six grade of primary school	5
	relations with perpetrators	stranger	Anonymous netizens	1
		ordinary classmates	In the same class without association	3
		close friends or partners	He was my best friend at that time; He was my boyfriend	8
		teachers	He was the mathematics teacher in our class.	5
	Supporters	friends	It was glad to meet my good friend later; University roommates can listen to me	17
		schoolmates	My roommates wasn't familiar with me, but chose to stand by my side	6
		families	I told my mom; My sister helped me to punish those people.	6
		teachers	The teacher criticized them hard.	5

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

core category	selective encoding	spindle coding	open coding	reference point
		No supporter	No one really understood me; No one ever stood by my side.	8

4 Conclusion

4.1 Results of the Situation in the Period of Being Bullied

The core category of situation during bullying is mainly constructed by four aspects, which are the way of being bullied, when bullying took place, relations with perpetrators, supporters.

- ① Most of the victims suffered isolation, verbal aggression, body attack, verbal threat, rumours, carrot and stick approach, mischievousness.
- ② Bullying took place both in primary school and middle school.
- ③ According to the information provided by the interviewees, the relationship between the bullies and them are often close friends or partners. Also, some of bullies are their teachers or ordinary classmates.
- ④ Most of the victims have some supporters, who are usually their friends; Some support also comes from classmates, family members and teachers. But there are also some of them who have no supporters and are in a helpless state.

4.2 Results of the Situation After Being Bullied

The core category of situation during bullying is mainly constructed by three aspects, which are the influences of bullying, ways out of predicament, whether to become a perpetrator or not.

- ① The experience of being bullied caused great negative impacts on the victims, like fear of interpersonal relationship, emotional and psychological problems, “three views” destroyed, great pressure, self-mutilation.

Besides, some interviewees supposed that this negative incident also brought them some non-negative or even positive influences. For example, some think there’s no big influences, or he becomes more tolerant, more cautious, more mature about interpersonal communication.

- ② Ways out of predicament for the victims after being bullied are mainly to change living environment, to evade, to comfort oneself and to receive support from others, to positively establish interpersonal relationship. Drug therapy, doing exercises or things one likes, or just waiting for the time to scour are also of some help.

Table 3. The coding results of post-bullying situation

core category	selective encoding	spindle coding	open coding	reference point
the situation after being bullied	the influences of bullying	fear of interpersonal relationship	fear of others having negative views on me; dare not communicate with people; do not trust others	66
		emotional and psychological problems	overeating; want to die; diagnosed as severe depression	34
		“three views” destroyed	at that time, my “three views” had not formed and was destroyed.	10
		great pressure	at that time, various pressures almost crushed me.	7
		self-mutilation	I can’t help hurting myself with a knife.	3
		no big influences	To be honest, it doesn’t matter	3
		become more tolerant	I feel more tolerant	7
		more mature interpersonal communication	on the contrary, I think bullying made me more mature in interpersonal communication	5
		become more cautious	I don’t do things casually as before	1
	ways out of predicament	change living environment	It was much better after I entered university; I didn’t stay in touch with them then	23
		evasion	I forced myself not to think about it; I felt well when it was out of my mind, but when it occurred to me I felt awful	23
		support from others	My father supported me; all my friends would comfort me	20
		self-comfort	I told myself that they would be punished; I told myself to ignore the bad guys	20

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

core category	selective encoding	spindle coding	open coding	reference point
		positively establish interpersonal relationship	I take the initiative to make new friends; I actively added wechat of the one I liked.	18
		drug therapy	I've been taking medicine; I feel better after taking medicine in hospital	7
		do exercises or things I like	Fitness makes me happy; I listen to music when I'm sad	7
		fade over time	In fact, time is the best medicine	5
	whether to become a perpetrator or not	exert violence	I beat him; I will deliberately shift a lot of responsibilities to my friends	15
		didn't exert violence	She asked me to isolate others with her, and I refused; I can sympathize with bullied person.	10

It's worth noting that among the adapting strategies of the victims, some strategies that may be considered ineffective or incompetent by the society, such as "evasion" and "fade over time", have also played a positive role.

- ③ Some interviewees then transferred their roles into new perpetrators before they got rid of the negative effects of being bullied. Although they knew that this was a vicious circle, they still alleviated their psychological pain through violence. However, some interviewees who were affected by bullying refused to be exert violence on others and were "very sympathetic to the bullied".

4.3 Further Possible Program and Study

Campus bullying is a painful experience for the bullied, which has caused many negative effects on them. Therefore, reducing school bullying and creating a safe and harmonious campus environment for students are an important part of education and school management.

Despite significant impacts, the victims of bullying still show a certain degree of self-healing ability after being bullied, and actively adapt to the new environment and develop interpersonal relationships through various social adaptation strategies. These methods of theirs may help other victims out of the shadow.

From the school level, schools should investigate and deal with relevant incidents in a timely manner, and punish the perpetrators. At the same time, they should work to

improve the help seeking mechanism to provide psychological assistance to the victims of bullying; From the level of teachers and parents, we need to have a certain sensitivity to the campus bullying events experienced by children and provide support for them.

This study mainly presents the difficulties faced by the bullied students and their social adaptation strategies after being bullied. There is no in-depth study on the specific process of their social adaptation and how external factors play a role in their inner world. Subsequent studies can further explore the specific process on this basis. In the row header should be bold and you can use the style available from the style palette.

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