Relationship Between Aggression, Bullying, Suicidal Ideation & Academic Achievement Among University Students

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ABSTRACT

Universities play a crucial role in shaping students' intellectual and personal growth, offering them the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and develop essential life skills. However, bullying within university settings remains a serious issue that can negatively impact students' mental health and academic performance. This study aimed to explore the relationship between aggression, bullying behavior, suicidal ideation, and academic achievement among university students. A total sample of 200 students (100 males and 100 females) between the ages of 18 and 25 participated in the research, selected through a stratified sampling technique. The tools used for data collection included the Aggression Scale, Bullying Scale, and Beck's Suicidal Ideation Scale, while academic achievement was assessed through students' grades or CGPA. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 25, applying Pearson correlation to examine relationships among variables and t-tests to assess gender differences. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between bullying behavior and both aggression and suicidal ideation, while a negative correlation was observed between bullying and academic achievement. Descriptive statistics showed that males scored higher on aggression and bullying, whereas females scored higher on suicidal ideation and academic performance. The study suggests that bullying is more prevalent among male students and that those exposed to or involved in bullying are at greater risk of aggressive behavior, suicidal thoughts, and poor academic outcomes. It emphasizes the need for universities, in collaboration with human rights organizations and mental health professionals, to implement preventive strategies, psychological counseling, and awareness programs to foster a safer and more supportive academic environment.

Key Words*: Aggression, Bullying, Suicidal-ideation, Academic achievement, Relationship, Students.*

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a persistent, deliberate act of aggression between bullies and victims who are typically of different power levels. Physical characteristics and social standing seem to provide aggressors more authority to victimise other people (Nansel et al., 2004). Traditional face-to-face bullying is a type of aggressiveness that can be either verbal (such as calling someone names, threatening them, extorting money from them, or making hurtful comments) or physical (e.g., hitting, pushing around, or physical intimidation). It could also be indirect or relational, including social exclusion or rumor-mongering against the victims (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007). In the 2000s, a new type of bullying that extends traditional bullying evolved; this type uses electronic technologies to propagate bullying outside of university

boundaries. Instead than being based on physical dominance or social prestige, this cyberbullying power is derived on social media skill (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

Student life at a university entails a variety of activities, such as regular academic obligations, social connections with peers, separation from family and friends, and changes in financial circumstances. Suicidal thoughts and aggression are both prevalent mental health issues that, alone or together, may have negative effects on one's mental, physical, or socioeconomic health.

Previous research has found a substantial link between a history of aggression and suicidal attempts, as well as increased aggression in people who have suicidal thoughts. Although some earlier studies found relatively high rates of aggression and suicidal ideation among university students and concentrated on high-risk cases, little is known about the circumstances of the factors that trigger these pathologies and their association with particular elements of student life (Mousavi et al., 2012).

Academic attainment is important for educational institutions around the world, and several studies are being conducted on the physical aspects that can have an impact on educational performance. Academic achievement is the result that displays a person's degree of performance as measured against objectives for the learning environment in schools, colleges, and universities (Steinmayr et al., 2016). Academic success is significantly influenced by all types of motivation (Wentzel & Wigfield, 1998). For instance, when students lack motivation and are forced to study in intimidating conditions, their academic performance suffers (Dweck, 2007).

Bullying and peer victimization always negatively affect the victims, whether directly or indirectly, and they lower academic attainment and performance (Holt et al., 2007). Bullying and poor academic performance are usually linked. Because they are afraid of standing out, bullied students make less progress in their academic achievement. Teachers frequently label those kids as underachievers or uninterested learners. The lecturers may then pay these students less attention, which only causes them to fall farther in their institutions' academic standings. Students who receive support from their teachers feel more involved, more a part of the class, have fewer behavioral issues, and perform better academically (Konishi et al., 2010). On the other hand, impure learning environments can have a negative impact on a student's academic achievements. (Strøm et al., 2013).

The family is typically the first place where learning begins, and any bullying that takes place at home has an impact on the person through anger, endangering their academic performance in any learning institution. Other forms of bullying that a person can pick up from home and use in educational institutions include physical abuse, authoritarian parenting, and aggressive behaviors. These types of bullying have a negative impact on academic performance or achievements (Bond et al., 2010). Unexpectedly, students who bully other students also suffer some unfavorable consequences. For instance, research indicates that bullies are more prone to use violence, steal or vandalize property, smoke, drink, report failing grades, and carry a pistol. These students may also be more likely to commit significant crimes later in life, according to the findings of numerous long-term studies. Bullies are unfortunately not always easy to identify. Bullies may be among the students with the best grades or the finest social skills; they may even be adept at making friends with school officials, teachers, and other adults. When the bully cannot be easily identified, the institution finds it challenging to take appropriate action (Nansel et al., 2003).

Given that the majority of prior efforts have concentrated on studying the phenomena of bullying exclusively in schools, this research is especially significant in addressing bullying in universities. The purpose of the study is to clarify how various aspects of academic bullying relate to one another (verbal bullying, teaching bullying, and reactive bullying). It also explains the scope of suicide ideation among university students. The study's precise goals were to assess the lifetime and current prevalence of bullying, violence, and suicidal ideation or attempt, as well as to identify the risks and protective factors that may be

present. It illustrates the distinctions between them based on gender. Additionally, we investigated the connections between these four variables (i.e. bullying, aggression, suicidal ideation, and academic achievement) and variables like gender, age, and family situation of students.

METHODS & MATERIALS

This study is a quantitative correlational research aimed at examining the relationship between aggression, bullying, suicidal ideation, and academic achievement among university students. The population for this research comprised students from various departments across universities, with a focus on institutions located in Sindh. Data collection primarily took place in universities situated in Jamshoro. After the data was gathered, it was analyzed using Pearson correlation and t-test. The statistical analysis and interpretation were carried out through SPSS version 25.00.

A total sample of 200 university students was selected from different universities in Jamshoro. The sample was evenly divided by gender, comprising 100 males and 100 females, with all participants falling within the age range of 18 to 25 years. Each participant had a minimum educational qualification of 16 years. The sampling technique employed for this research was stratified sampling, ensuring a representative distribution across demographic categories.

Three standardized measuring scales were used to assess the variables of interest. The Aggression Scale was used to measure aggressive behavior, the Bullying Scale to assess experiences and behaviors related to bullying, and the Beck Suicidal Ideation Scale (BSI) to evaluate suicidal thoughts. Academic achievement was assessed based on the students' grades or CGPA.

A demographic form was included in the research questionnaire to collect background information. This section asked participants for details such as name (optional), age, gender, family type, current academic class or qualification, grade or CGPA, and the name of their department or institute. This information was collected after obtaining informed consent from the participants.

Each scale was scored according to the standard procedures provided by the authors of the respective scales. The Aggression Scale is a self-report tool designed to assess overt and relational aggression over the past seven days. Responses are summed to generate a total score, with possible scores ranging from 0 to 66. Higher scores indicate more frequent engagement in aggressive behavior.

The Bullying Scale, developed by Melissa Holt and Dorothy Espelage, evaluates the frequency of bullying and victimization experiences over the past 30 days. It uses a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (seven or more times), with a total score range from 0 to 36. Higher scores reflect greater involvement in bullying behavior.

The Beck Suicidal Ideation Scale (BSI) is a 21-item self-report instrument that identifies and measures the severity of suicidal thoughts, behaviors, and plans. Each item offers three choices, scored from 0 to 2, with a total score range of 0 to 38. Higher scores indicate a greater risk of suicide.

Initially, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were briefed about the research objectives, its purpose, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Participants were then asked to complete the research questionnaire, which included the aforementioned psychological scales and a demographic form. Stratified sampling was used to ensure a balanced representation. The participants were given clear instructions to maintain privacy and to complete the scales in the order presented. Since all participants had adequate educational backgrounds and could understand English, it was assumed that they would comprehend the key terms used in the study such as aggression, bullying, suicidal ideation, and academic achievement. The researchers expressed their gratitude to the participants for their cooperation and valuable time.

RESULTS

To interpret the results Descriptive Statistics, Correlation Coefficient, and t-test were applied by using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) Vol. 25 to see the Relationship between Aggression, Bullying, Suicidal Ideation and Academic Achievement.

Table 1: Age Of Respondent

Age of respondent

N		
	Valid	200
	Missing	0

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	18	14	7.0
	19	25	12.5
	20	32	16.0
	21	41	20.5
	22	42	21.0
	23	23	11.5
	24	17	8.5
	25	6	3.0
	Total	200	100.0

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviation of Exam Anxiety and Academic Self-Efficacy. It shows that the mean of Exam Anxiety is 24.2600 and its standard deviation is 9.21310, The mean of Self-Efficacy is 89.9500 and its standard deviation is 23.27889.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Variables

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Exam Anxiety	24.2600	9.21310	100
Academic Self-Efficacy	89.9500	23.27889	100

Table 3 shows results that there is significant relationship between Exam Anxiety and Academic Self-Efficacy. Hence our hypothesis is proved with above results that there is significant relationship between Exam Anxiety and Academic Self-Efficacy.

Table 3: Correlation Table of Exam Anxiety and Academic Self-Efficacy.

		Academic Self-Efficacy
Exam Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-.667[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

N	100

Table 4 shows that there is a significant gender difference between the scores of Male and Female. Mean value of Aggression in Male Students = 22.4200 and in Female Students = 19.7900. The Mean of Bullying scale for Male = 28.7200 and for Female = 25.6800. The Mean of BSIS scale for Male = 7.5900 and for Female = 9.3300. While the Mean of Academic Achievement for Male = 2.8090 and for Female = 2.8220.

Table 4: Showing Group Statistics of Average Scores of Male and Female Participants

	gender of respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Aggression	Male	100	22.4200	9.78164
	Female	100	19.7900	8.53430
Bullying	Male	100	28.7200	9.18506
	Female	100	25.6800	7.54900
BSIS	Male	100	7.5900	6.68497
	Female	100	9.3300	6.70904
Academic Achievement	Male	100	2.8090	.34233
	Female	100	2.8220	.29045

BSIS = Beck Suicidal Ideation Scale

The Descriptive Statistics shows that Males have higher scores on Aggression and Bullying whereas comparatively Females have higher scores on Suicidal Ideation and Academic Achievement. Hence our hypothesis is proved with above results that there is a significant gender difference between Males and Females.

Table 5 shows that t-test is to see the significance difference between male and female group. It is seen in the table that the t-value for significance level l between average of the groups (i.e. male and female) on the scale of aggression, bullying, suicidal ideation and academic achievement.

Table 5: Independent Sample t-test for Aggression, Bullying and Suicidal Ideation.

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances

		F	Sig.	T
Aggression	Equal variances assumed	9.199	.003	2.026
	Equal variances not assumed			2.026

Bullying	Equal variances assumed	10.826	.001	2.557
	Equal variances not assumed			2.557
BSIS	Equal variances assumed	.002	.969	-1.837
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.837
Academic Achievement	Equal variances assumed	3.671	.057	-.290
	Equal variances not assumed			-.290

BSIS = Beck Suicidal Ideation Scale

DISCUSSIONS

In this study, the "association between aggression, bullying, suicidal ideation and academic accomplishment" will be evaluated. Bullying causes a variety of issues, such as poor academic performance, suicidal thoughts, and violent and fatal acts at all educational levels (Chibbaro & Holland, 2013). While common psychological issues like aggression and suicidal ideation can have negative effects on a person's mental, physical, or socioeconomic health. Undoubtedly, suicidal ideation among university students is a complex phenomenon with widely acknowledged detrimental effects on families, friends, and even the socioeconomic advancement of the nations in which it occurs. The present study will help to understand the different concepts and the relationship of all variables, and also focuses on gender differences.

The scope of this study refers to a vital range of implication in faculties and other educational institutes. Our study can also help to alert government, universities, and parents to the prevalence of bullying behavior among university students. This study will also help people to cope up with difficult situations.

The total sample size was comprised of 200 participants with the age range of 18-25 from the University of Sindh Jamshoro. Both genders were given equal representation (i.e. 100 Males and 100 Females). Three scales were used to measure the respective variables i.e. Aggression Scale, Bullying Scale, and Beck's Suicidal Ideation Scale. Then the data was entered/input in SPSS on items level and then analyzed data by performing Descriptive Statistics, Correlation and Independent Sample t-test.

With the help of Descriptive Statistics, mean and standard deviation were found. And through Pearson Correlation the relationship among variables was observed. While through Independent Sample t-test the differences between the scores of males and females were found.

The first hypothesis was "There would be a significant relationship among aggression, bullying behavior and suicidal ideation among university students", after analyzing the data it was found that the correlation was positively significant at level 0.05 which shows the hypothesis is proved. The previous studies also suggested the result, which states that research data indicate that youth victimized from bullying are nearly six times more likely to engage in aggression as well as in suicidal ideations/behaviors (Li & and Shi, 2018).

The second hypothesis was "The participants would scores high on bullying behavior will score high on aggression scale and vice versa", this hypothesis was tested by Pearson Correlation therefore this hypothesis is also significantly proved. The previous studies also suggested this result, which states that the bullying

is an intentional aggressive behaviour which is carried out repeatedly, and commonly occur between offenders and victims who are unequal in power. Factors are like as physical size, social status to empower aggressors to victimize different individuals (Nansel et al., 2004).

The third hypothesis was "The participants would scores high on bullying behavior will score high on suicidal ideation and vice versa", the results are significant therefore this hypothesis is also proved. The previous studies also suggested this result, which states that the individual who are involved in bullying cycle have higher rate of depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation being bullied increases the suicidal ratio (Tural Hesapcioglu et al., 2018).

The fourth hypothesis was "the participants would scores high on bullying behavior will have a lower level of academic achievement and vice versa" it was found that the results are significant therefore this hypothesis is also proved. Previous studies about peer bullying in the educational institutes showed many mental problems seem to be related to bullying or victimization such as, depression, anxiety, psychosomatic complaints, night wetting, spluttering, encopresis, suicidal ideas, conduct disorder, bipolar disorder, alcohol and substance use disorders. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Tural Hesapcioglu & Ercan, 2017).

The fifth hypothesis was "There would be a significant difference on the scores of males and females", this hypothesis was tested by applying t-test, after analyzing it was found that the mean value of Aggression in Male Students = 22.4200 and in female Students = 19.7900. The mean of bullying scale for male is 28.7200 and for female is 25.6800. The mean value of BSIS scale for male = 7.5900 and for female = 9.3300. While the mean of academic achievement for male is 2.8090 and for female is 2.8220. So, this hypothesis has also been proved.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that there is a significant relationship between aggression, bullying behavior, suicidal ideation and academic achievement among university students. After analyzing the data it was found that the correlation was positively significant. The findings highlighted that participant who scores high on aggression have a high bullying behavior, it is also revealed that participants who scores high on bullying behavior will have a high level of suicidal ideation and on the other hand, the participants will have a lower level of academic achievement who scores high on bullying behavior. This study also shows that there is a significant gender differences on the scores of males and females. This study also shows that the score of male are high on Aggression and bullying while female score high on Suicidal Ideation and Academic Achievement. All these hypothesis are hence proved that shows that the relationship exists among variables.

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