

The Role of Family Support in Mitigating the Psychological Effects of Bullying Among School-Age Children

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Abstract: Bullying is a pervasive issue affecting students' psychological health, academic engagement, and self-concept. While numerous studies emphasize school-based interventions, the role of family as a protective factor in a child's recovery process is often underexplored. This paper investigates how emotional and structural support from families—particularly parental empathy, reassurance, and advocacy—helps mitigate the negative impact of bullying. Using a small-scale mixed-method approach that incorporated the Self-Concept Questionnaire (SCQ) and qualitative interviews, the study found that children with strong family support systems exhibited higher levels of resilience, academic motivation, and moral integrity compared to those with weaker familial bonds. The findings reinforce that recovery from bullying is not an isolated psychological process but a collaborative effort involving children, families, and educational institutions.

Keywords: Bullying, Family Support, Self-Concept, Emotional Resilience, Parental Involvement, School Collaboration

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1. Introduction

Bullying is a global concern, affecting an estimated one in three students during their schooling years (UNESCO, 2019). Defined as repeated, intentional aggression that results in physical or psychological harm (Olweus, 1993), it has lasting consequences on a child's mental health, including anxiety, depression, and impaired self-esteem (Espelage & Swearer, 2010). While schools often focus on prevention and reporting mechanisms, the emotional aftermath of bullying is most profoundly influenced by the child's immediate social environment—particularly the family. This paper explores how familial engagement functions as a psychological buffer, strengthening self-concept and emotional regulation in children who experience bullying.

2. Methodology

A small-scale exploratory study was conducted with school-age participants who had reported experiences of bullying. The research employed:

- **Quantitative Component:** Administration of the Self-Concept Questionnaire (SCQ) to measure parameters such as self-esteem, academic motivation, and moral development.
- **Qualitative Component:** Semi-structured interviews with parents and children to identify behavioral and emotional coping mechanisms.

Data were analyzed to identify correlations between perceived family support and positive self-concept scores among bullied children.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 The Child's Perspective

Children who reported being bullied showed a decline in self-confidence and increased anxiety levels. However, those with high parental engagement—defined by open communication and consistent emotional reassurance—exhibited significantly stronger self-belief and motivation to continue performing academically.

3.2 The Mother's Role: Emotional Warmth and Regulation

Mothers were typically the first to detect behavioral changes, such as withdrawal, irritability, or loss of interest in school. Their responses combined emotional warmth with proactive measures—monitoring online activity, encouraging self-expression, and engaging professional counseling when needed.

3.3 The Father's Role: Affirmation and Advocacy

Fathers often contributed through confidence-building practices such as daily affirmations and involvement in extracurricular encouragement. Many expressed the need for schools to strengthen anti-bullying frameworks and teacher training.

3.4 School-Family Collaboration

Children whose parents actively collaborated with teachers and school counselors demonstrated faster emotional recovery and improved peer reintegration. This underscores the importance of a shared framework between educational institutions and homes.

4. Case Illustration: Transforming Pain into Purpose

A relevant case that exemplifies the interaction between family support and resilience is that of Anoushka Jolly,

a student who faced severe bullying at the age of nine. With strong family encouragement, she converted her adversity into activism by founding the Anti-Bullying Squad (ABS) in 2018-a youth-led initiative promoting empathy and inclusion across Indian schools.

5. Conclusion

The findings affirm that family support functions as a critical protective factor in mitigating the adverse effects of bullying on children's psychological development. Emotional scaffolding, structured reassurance, and advocacy-driven parenting enhance resilience and restore self-worth. However, effective recovery demands a collaborative model: Families must provide emotional grounding and advocacy, schools must maintain transparent, empathetic systems for addressing bullying, and communities must promote awareness and empathy-based education.

6. References

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Author's Note

This paper is based on a student-led independent research study conducted as part of a school project exploring the intersection of psychology, education, and family systems. The work reflects a growing interest in understanding how empathy and family engagement can be scientifically integrated into anti-bullying frameworks and policy recommendations.