STUDENTS BULLYING: ASSOCIATION WITH THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

Bullying has emerged as a significant concern within educational settings, particularly at the secondary level. The study was designed to explore the association between school bullying and academic achievement among secondary level students in Peshawar district. Main objective of the study was: to examine the association between school bullying and academic achievement. The study was quantitative in nature by using descriptive survey design. 67 girl high schools of district Peshawar were the population of the study from which 10 schools were selected using cluster sampling technique. 370 students were selected using proportionate random sampling technique i.e. 37 students from each school. A questionnaire was used for the collection of quantitative data having five point Likert scale. The data was collected, tabulated and statistically analyzed through descriptive statistics, chi-square and regression. In the light of students' perception, the study concluded that school bullying and academic achievement at secondary level were significantly associated with each other having mediating and moderating effect of school bullying on psychological wellbeing and school climate. Participants expressed that bullying not only affects students' mental health but also contributes to decreased motivation and engagement in academic activities. This research underscores the urgent need for comprehensive policies and interventions to foster a safer and more conducive learning atmosphere, ultimately promoting better academic success for all students.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most crucial transitional phases in a person's life is the adolescence period, also called as the storm and stress period. The term was first used by an American Psychologist G. Stanley Hall to explain the hassles, behavioral patterns and changes occurring in the life of an adolescent (Stirrups, 2018). This period is characterized by biological growth, cognitive development, psychological and social transitions accompanied with the need of freedom and independence, role and identity formation and social acceptance (Dornbusch, 2000). The experiences in the form of traumas encountered during the childhood or adolescence can sufficiently affect the adolescent development making them vulnerable to various psychosocial problems (Bick & Nelson, 2016).

As adolescents develop abstract thinking, they begin to grapple with complex moral and ethical questions. The development of reasoning abilities can sometimes be overshadowed by impulsivity, leading to risky behaviors and poor choices that contribute to psychosocial problems. Relationships with peers become increasingly important, and the pressure to conform can lead to involvement in negative behaviors, such as bullying or delinquency. Understanding the interplay between physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development is essential for identifying at-risk adolescents and providing appropriate support and interventions. Addressing these psychosocial issues holistically can promote healthier development and improve outcomes for adolescents.

Among various psychosocial dysfunctions, harassment, violence and bullying are the paradigms which badly affect the child's health and safety. However, bullying is regarded as the most devastating and life threatening issue having substantial effects on the behavioral, social, mental, physical and educational aspects of a person's life (Ybarra et al., 2007) while violence can be regarded as a threat or a deliberate harm that can be sexual, physical or psychological (Small &Tetrick, 2001). Researchers mostly define bullying as a form of violence which may be manifested as deliberate or sometimes unintentional aggressive behavior from a bully (individual/ group) towards a victim (another individual) due to power imbalance between the two opponents (Olweus, 2012). Bullying follows power imbalance which may be perceived or actual (Green et al., 2013). This power imbalance happens due to reasons like difference in socioeconomic status, physical strength or body size, gender, religious beliefs, race and the urge to dominate or to be in charge of everything (Vaillancourt et al., 2008). The three facets of bullying include intent, power imbalance and repetition. Factors contributing to bullying may also include social and economic disparities, cultural norms, weak school management, lack of teacher training, and limited access to counseling and support services (Johnson et al., 2009). Thus one can't say that there is a single motive for bullying to occur. It can happen over regular intervals repeatedly causing a physical, psychological, social or educational distress.

Students from lower socioeconomic class typically look forward to their more popular friends and even try to imitate their traits (Brady, 2015). Regardless of how and to what extent they reshape themselves to fit their image, it is not unusual for low status pupils to fall in the social hierarchy. This is a result of the widespread belief that people at the bottom of the social scale are inherently "defective" (Brady, 2015). It is noteworthy that, among many other things, socioeconomic position, ethnicity, involvement in extracurricular activities, team membership, and fashion sense may all be used to establish status hierarchies in schools.

Various forms of bullying have been discussed by Owens, Spirito and McGuinn, (2000). According to researchers, the usual forms of bullying which are frequently put into use are humiliations by passing negative comments or remarks, name-calling and nicknames, physical or emotional abuse, threatening in the form of verbal abuse and social exclusion or isolation from gatherings (Smith &Shu, 2002). Bullies may even badmouth a person just to humiliate him/ her. However, bullying are not only confined to ill treatments or physical harassments but infact employs to all other potential forms of harassment manifesting mean gestures and facial expression, badmouthing, stigmatizing and spreading rumors to embarrass someone and hurting others. Thus, the various forms of bullying include physical and verbal bullying. With the advent of technology and more usage of the internet has introduced a more technologically-oriented form of aggression known as cyberbullying (Siddiqui et al., 2021). When students are subjected to cyberbullying, their ability to focus and concentrate on their studies can be greatly

impaired. They may experience anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues, which can lead to decreased motivation and academic performance.Victims of bullying are more likely to skip school to avoid confrontation; leading to gaps in learning and academic decline (Thornberg et al., 2021).This avoidance behavior can result in cumulative knowledge deficits over time.

According to Takizawa et al., (2014), individuals who experienced bullying as students often carry the harmful consequences of bullying into their late adult years. Even at the age of fifty, those who experienced bullying as children still had the wounds of that treatment, as stated by Takizawa et al., (2014). For instance, compared to their friends who are not bullied, bullied people continue to exhibit worse signsof health issues. According to Rettew and Pawlowski (2016), older adults who experienced bullying as children are more likely to suffer from anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts than those who did not. As compared to those who were not bullied, victims of bullying exhibited patterns of lower educational achievement and worse cognitive function (Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016). According to Takizawa et al., (2014), older adults who have experienced bullying are unable to maintain positive relationship because of the idea that bullying among youth was more acceptable in the past, that this is only a passing occurrence (Poon, 2016).

Bullying has significant academic consequences that can adversely affect both the victims and the perpetrators. Understanding these impacts is essential for addressing bullying within educational settings. Victims of bullying often experience declines in academic performance, resulting in lower grades and test scores. Students who are bullied may become disengaged from school activities, leading to a lack of participation in class and reduced effort on assignments. Victims may skip school to avoid bullying, resulting in missed learning opportunities and falling behind in their studies. Chronic bullying can contribute to increased dropout rates as students feel unsafe or unsupported in their educational environment.The emotional toll of bullying can lead to anxiety and depression, making it difficult for victims to concentrate on academic tasks.Constant worry about bullying can occupy mental space, detracting from the ability to focus on learning.Victims may isolate themselves from classmates, missing out on collaborative learning opportunities and social interactions that enhance the learning experience (Wang et al., 2012).

Bullying can occur anywhere but is more likely to happen in the school setting, in or around the school premises (Delfabbro et al., 2006). The experiences occurring at school are considered central to understand the different patterns of adolescent health and behavior. The students with positive school experiences tend to be more productive and perform better while negative experiences may lead to rebellious behavior and criminal tendencies (Lockwood et al., 2016). A person who has been physically bullied is unable to keep a positive attitude during and after school hours (Shah & Khan, 2021).Those people who are likely to be both victimized and bully others i.e. having dual status are identified to have the most critical psychosocial problems in their lives (Ybarra et al., 2007).

Bullying can occur among peer to peer, teacher to student, principal to teacher and vice versa i.e. among students, teachers and other staff personnel. According to the confirmation of Konishi et al., (2010), interpersonal relationships within school environment affect the academic achievement of student.Incidents of bullying in schools can be triggered by conflicts among students, gang-related activities, political or religious tensions, or even external influences such as exposure to violent media.

Bullying has become a major concern in schools of Pakistan, affecting both the physical and emotional well-being of students. This pervasive issue often goes unmarked and unreported, leading to life time consequences for the victims. The aggressive behaviors in educational settings can have a negative impact on the victims' academic performance. Developing countries like Pakistan, where a nationally representative school-based health survey in 2009 reported the prevalence of bullying behavior to be around 41% (Shaikh, 2013). Another disturbing result is that approximately 45.3% of the students reported being victims of bullying, while 42.1% were perpetrators of bullying and 31.2% were both victims and perpetrators (Khawaja et al., 2015). Therefore it is necessary to create a safe and supportive environment in schools where students feel comfortable reporting incidents of bullying.

Bullying in schools has emerged as a critical issue affecting students' well-being and academic performance worldwide.The World Health Organization (2019) estimates that nearly one in three students globally experiences bullying, underscoring the urgency of addressing this issue within educational settings. Research suggests that schools with a negative climate characterized by poor teacher-student relationships, inadequate supervision, and lack of supportive policies are more likely to experience higher rates of bullying (Bradshaw et al., 2010). As educational institutions strive to create safe and supportive learning environments, understanding the multifaceted relationship between school bullying and academic performance becomes increasingly vital.

School Bullying and Academic Achievement

Van der Werf (2014) examined the short- and long-term effects of bullying on students' academic performance. She discovered that depending on a student's academic accomplishment, there are variations in the association between bullying level and academic performance. (Tukeshova, 2021) looked at the effects of bullying on students' capacity for academic success.

According to her, kids who are bullied experience anxiety when they arrive at school because they believe they are in danger and with the passage of time they develop severe psychological issues. As a result, they find it difficult to focus, which has a detrimental effect on their academic performance. The association between bullying in Danish primary schools was examined by MundbjergEriksen et al., (2014). They discovered that kids who experience bullying do worse academically in the ninth grade, and the effects of bullying worsen with severity.

In accordance with Ndibalema (2013), physical bullying is viewed as dominating. Mehta et al. (2013) stated that, children who see bullying as a common occurrence at their school experience feelings of insecurity, leading to a decrease in their level of engagement with the school community. As a result, they lack ambition to perform well in school and do not take part in extracurricular activities. Bullying has a variety of effects on students' academic performance. According to Ammermueller's (2012), research, bullying has a detrimental effect on pupils' academic performance both in the present and future. Research study of Brank et al., (2012) revealed that, those who are bullied tend to be timid, weak, and nervous. They continued by saying that victims do poorly academically and try to avoid going to school in order to prevent being victims. Victimization experiences might result in subpar academic work and absenteeism. According to Skapinakis et al., (2011), bullies were less likely than victims to report having suicide thoughts.

Bullying experiences have a direct and indirect impact on victims' academic success, according to Juvonen et al., (2011). Therefore, a kid who is being bullied by his peers may cease engaging in class or find it difficult to focus on his schoolwork out of fear of being taunted. They went on to say that kids who experience peer bullying frequently exhibit worse academic performance and lower levels of involvement in the classroom. According to Konishi et al., (2010), interpersonal connections in the educational setting impact scholastic success. Bullying has a strong association with poor academic performance, as demonstrated by the students' inability to focus during lectures. Bullying makes homes and schools less safe, and it has an adverse effect on a school-aged child's mental, social, and physical health. The family and the school are the principal areas where bullying is common and practiced (Rigby, 2012).
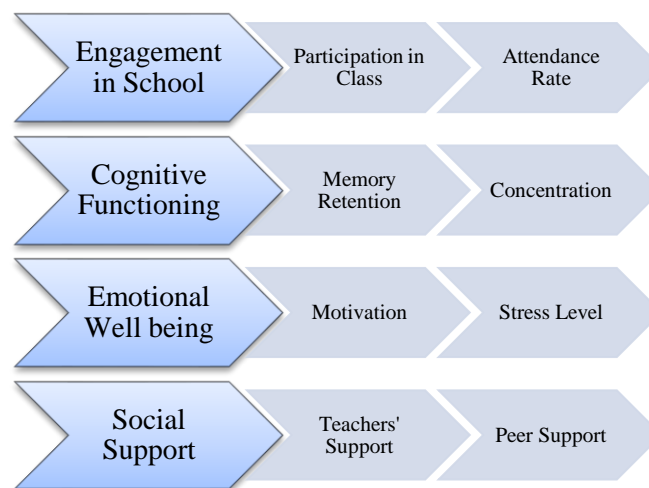

Fig.2.2 Key Components of Academic Achievement

Several studies have found that victims of bullying often experience declines in academic performance. For instance, Nansel et al., (2001) reported that bullied students scored lower on standardized tests and exhibited poorer academic performance. Research by Haynie et al., (2001) suggests that the effects of bullying on academic achievement can extend beyond the immediate term, influencing long-term educational outcomes and career prospects. Since the family is typically the first setting in which a kid learns, any bullying that takes place there has an adverse effect on the child's ability to learn since it makes them angry, which can further jeopardize their success in school. Additional types of bullying a kid might pick up from home and apply at school include physical abuse, authoritarian parents, poor family cohesiveness, and aggressive behaviors, all of which have a detrimental effect on academic achievement (Bond et al., 2010).

Violent behavior is usual within students from low socio economic back ground with outcomes such as stress, anxiety, and poor educational achievement (Hyndman & Telford, 2015). Bullies and victims both struggle with hyperactivity, focus issues, and a constant lack of acceptance from their peers (Fanti&Georgiou, 2013). Students' academic performance is negatively impacted by any bullying-related issue. Student exposure to violence in the home, community, and school has a detrimental effect on academic performance. Youths are exposed to violence, witness violent incidents in their community or school, and suffer the consequences on their academic performance. The social disorganization hypothesis and the concentration effects are two hypotheses that explain how bullying among young people might happen. Concentration

impacts resulted by inner cities' concentration. Adolescents who witness violent activities are more prone to commit the same crimes.

Bullying exposes adolescents to a variety of obstacles as they make the transition from elementary school to high school, which can have a positive or negative impact on their development. Any aggressive conduct in the home will also be reflected in the school, and exposure frequently results in transgressions that are carried over into the community and the school. It is essential to remember that bullying behavior typically affects both the victims and the offenders. Maliki et al.,(2009) asserted that all bullies have experienced bullying in the past. Bullying affects students' academic performance because it makes them feel uncomfortable, which makes them avoid school. Children that are bullied tend to be weak, timid, and frightened. They also avoid going to school since they have been victimized repeatedly, and this has a negative impact on their academic performance (Rose et al., 2011). Being bullied is linked to feeling insecure in schools, experiencing loneliness, feeling like an outsider, and missing class to avoid being bullied. Because of the consequences they have on the pupils, bullying and victimization are linked to low academic success in schools (Kokkinos&Kipritsi, 2012). Peer harassment causes students to feel unsafe and lose interest in going to school.

According to Chaux and Castellanos (2015), 10 to 15 percent of teenagers globally experience bullying two or more times per month. Skrzypiecet al., (2013) discovered that one third of students who had experienced severe bullying said they had significant trouble focusing and paying attention in class as a result of the bullying and the anxiety it evoked. Bullying inhibits focus and subsequent academic accomplishment because victims lose interest in studying and see a decline in their academic marks as a result of their attention being diverted from learning, according to Glew et al. (2005).

In the Pakistani context, the academic implications of bullying are similar. A study by Rukh et al., (2023) revealed that students who were victims of bullying demonstrated poor academic performance, attributing their struggles to psychological distress, fear, and lack of concentration in class. Additionally, bullying has been linked to decreased school attendance (Yousaf et al., 2024), which further exacerbates the negative impact on academic outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

School bullying has significant detrimental effects on students. Despite efforts to create safe and nurturing educational environment, incidents of bullying persist, impacting the physical and psychological well-being of students. Various researches have proven that school bullying can have damaging consequences in the short run (Havik et al., 2015) and long run (Copeland et al., 2013) affecting the students' health and well-being. Bullying has emerged as significant concerns within educational settings, particularly at the secondary level. Ammermueller (2012) stated that bullying has a significant negative impact on students' performance in school and shows the association of bullying with students' academic achievement.

Despite extensive research on bullying, gaps remain in understanding how it specifically impacts academic achievement among secondary school students. While some studies suggest that victims of bullying experience declines in their academic performance due to emotional and psychological distress, others indicate that the academic environment itself may contribute to the prevalence of bullying behaviors. This study seeks to investigate the intricate association

between school bullying and academic achievement, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to foster a positive school climate. The problems while addressing the issue of school bullying require a comprehensive approach involving various stakeholders including educators, parents, policymakers, and communities. The hurdles faced to create a safe and inclusive learning environments involves the lack of effective anti-bullying policies, absence of empathy and respect among students and insufficient support systems for victims.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the association between school bullying and academic achievement of students at secondary level in district Peshawar.

Research Questions

RQ1. Is there a significant association between school bullying and academic achievement among secondary-level students in District Peshawar?

Research Hypotheses

H_{01} There is no significant association between school bullying and academic achievement among secondary level students in District Peshawar.

H_{02} There is no significant effect of school bullying on the academic achievement of students at secondary level.

Significance of the Study

The primary reason for studying school bullying is to ensure the safety and well-being of students. School is supposed to be a safe and nurturing environment for learning, but bullying can have severe psychological, emotional and physical consequences for the victims. This may hinder the accomplishment of their educational goals and progress towards them. Thus, the study at hand may provide insights into the prevalence and nature of school bullying and understanding of the association between school bullying and academic achievement, including potential mediators and moderators. This will help in identification of key factors influencing this association and implications for policy and practice. The study will draw the attention of the administrators and stake holder to the consequences of bullying on students and will try to provide effective strategies to cope up with the odds of bullying.

Researcher will also shed light on the mental and physical health implications for students who experience or witness school bullying. It can help identify potential mental health issues like depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder, allowing for early intervention and support. Experiencing bullying at school can adversely affect students' academic performance. They may struggle with concentration, attendance and engagement, leading to lower grades and a negative impact on their future prospects.This study will be addressing the educational authorities for taking effective and sufficient actions while identifying problems related to the bullying. For practical implications, the researcher will present this work in different educational conferences and seminars. It requires continued collaboration among policymakers, educators, parents, and students to create safe and nurturing environments that promote respect, empathy, and non-violence.Research findings can influence the development of legislation and policies aimed at curbing bullying at schools. Informed policies can promote a safer learning environment and hold individuals accountable for their actions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology to be applied was quantitative and data was generated for the purpose of data collection. Data from the students was collected in order to have a brief understanding of the phenomena of study. The population of the study included all Government Girls High schools of district Peshawar. There are 67 girls high school having

26,124 students (Annual Statistical Report 2021-22). The target population was class 10th students i.e. 8730 public sector girl schools of district Peshawar (Annual Statistical Report 2021-22). The sample size and technique used for the collection of data was following. Students of class 10th were taken as a sample for the study. Random sampling technique was used to select the sample of students from the population. The sample was selected in two steps. In first step, cluster sampling was used to select the sample on geographical basis to give whole representation to the target population of district Peshawar. A total of 10 girls schools i.e. 05 schools from rural areas and 05 from urban areas of district Peshawar were selected by using cluster sampling technique. Raosoft sample size calculator was used by entering the population in the data with 95% confidence level and 5% margin error. The sample size generated by using software was 370. In order to give equal representation to each school, therefore in the 2nd step proportionate sampling technique was used to select 37 students each from total 10 schools. A self-designed closed ended questionnaire was developed with the help of various resources of literature and administered to students in the supervision of the research supervisor. The questionnaire was used for seeking the perceptions of students. For academic achievement, the annual results of 9th, session 2021-2022 i.e. students of current class 10th who have passed their board exams were also taken into consideration to have an overview of their academic achievement. The quantitative data obtained in the form of responses was coded, categorized and tabulated in Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for further analysis. Descriptive statistics was applied to find the mean and standard deviation, while inferential statistics was applied to draw further results and conclusions on the basis of data obtained. For this purpose, chi square, regression analysis was applied to analyze the association and impact of school bullying on the academic achievement of students.

DATA ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATION

Descriptive Analysis of Students' Perceptions Regarding School Bullying
Table 1 Students' Views Regarding School Bullying

Item #	Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	The severity of bullying incidents is becoming significantly high and is personally experienced by me in school.	163 (44.1)	84 (22.7)	0 (0)	91 (24.6)	32 (8.6)
2	Students frequently hit or push each other in school (Physical bullying)	221 (59.7)	4 (1.1)	12 (3.2)	35 (9.5)	98 (26.5)
3	Students use different social media platforms to bully their peers (Cyber bullying)	12 (3.2)	32 (8.6)	94 (25.4)	52 (14.1)	180 (48.6)
4	Students ignore or leave out each other on purpose (Social Bullying)	175 (47.3)	16 (4.3)	44 (11.9)	0 (0)	135 (36.5)
5	Students often give nasty names to each other (Verbal Bullying)	155 (41.9)	39 (10.5)	91 (24.6)	61 (16.5)	24 (6.5)

Item 1 showed that 66.8% of the respondent students claimed that the severity of bullying incidents is becoming significantly high and is personally experienced by me in school and 33.2% disagreed.

Item 2 showed that 60.8% of the respondents viewed that the Students frequently hit or push each other in school (Physical bullying), 36% disagreed and 3.2% were unable to decide.

Item 3 showed that 11.8% of the respondents agreed that the Students use different social media platforms to bully their peers (Cyber bullying), 62.7% of them were disagreed and 25.4% were unable to decide.

Item 4 showed that 51.6% of the respondents were of the same mind that the Students ignore or leave out each other on purpose (Social Bullying), 36.5% of them were disagreed and 11.9% were unable to decide.

Item 5 showed that 52.4% of the respondents agreed that the Students often give nasty names to each other (Verbal Bullying), 13% of them were disagreed and 24.6% were unable to decide.

Table 2 Students' views regarding Academic Achievement

Item	Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD
6	Bullying affects intellectual grades obtained by students in school.	124 (33.5)	123 (33.2)	0 (0)	116 (31.4)	7 (1.9)
7	Poor exam results are the outcome of school bullying.	30 (8.1)	117 (31.6)	43 (11.6)	132 (35.7)	48 (13.0)
8	Bullying creates a hostile learning environment that hinders academic success.	176 (47.6)	94 (25.4)	96 (25.9)	4 (1.1)	0 (0)
9	Students are unable to concentrate on their studies due to bullying.	169 (45.7)	164 (44.3)	25 (6.8)	5 (1.4)	7 (1.9)
10	1. The academic achievement of a student can be improved by effectively addressing bullying.	221 (59.7)	139 (37.6)	0 (0)	5 (1.4)	5 (1.4)

Item 6 showed that 66.7% of the respondents acknowledged that bullying affects intellectual grades obtained by students in school and 33.3% of them were disagreed.

Item 7 showed that 39.7% of the respondents accepted that poor exam results are the outcome of school bullying, 48.7% of them were disagreed and 11.6% were unable to decide.

Item 8 showed that 73% of the respondents agreed that bullying creates a hostile learning environment that hinders academic success, 1.1% of them were disagreed and 25.9% were unable to decide.

Item 9 showed that 90% of the respondents accepted that the students are unable to concentrate on their studies due to bullying, 3.3% of them were disagreed and 6.8% were unable to decide.

Item 10 showed that 97.3% of the respondents were agreed that the academic achievement of a student can be improved by effectively addressing bullying and 2.8% of them were disagreed.

Inferential Statistics - Chi Square Test

The test statistics to be used for finding the association of school bullying and academic achievement was following.

Table 3 Data regarding Association between School Bullying and Academic Achievement

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2066.826[a]	143	.000
Likelihood Ratio	1095.294	143	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	225.567	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	370		

The p-value .000 ($p < 0.01$) indicated a statistically significant association between the categorical variables being tested. This showed that the observed frequencies significantly differ from the expected frequencies under the null hypothesis. Similar to the Pearson Chi-Square, the likelihood ratio also showed a significant association, reinforcing the findings of

the Pearson Chi-Square test. The linear-by-linear indicated a significant linear relationship between two variables. The .000 p-value suggests that the relationship was not due to chance. The Chi-Square tests suggested a strong association between the variables tested, with significant p-values indicating that the null hypothesis Ho_1 "There is no significant association between school bullying and academic achievement among secondary level students in District Peshawar" was rejected.

Regression Analysis

Table 4   Regression Model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
1	.581[a]	.338	.336	.58887	187.812	.000[b]

The generated explanatory variable School Bullying was used to find its' effect on students' academic achievement at secondary level, using the regression model. The estimated model was statistically significant (F = 187.812; p = 0.000) and independent variable Academic Achievement was found statistically significant (t = 13.704; p < 0.01) towards the dependent variable School Bullying (SB). Table 4.1.7 also demonstrates that (R^2) = (0.338) which indicate that school bullying interpret (33.8%) of the change in academic achievement from students' perspective. According to the above results, the explanatory variable School Bullying (SB) was contributing towards dependent variable Academic Achievement (AA). The positive t-value provided evidence of a direct relationship between the two variables. According to above table (c) the p-value obtained was .000 which is less than .001 and showed statistical significance. The significant value showed that school bullying affects academic achievement of students at school. Therefore, hypothesis Ho_2 "There is no significant impact of bullying on the academic achievement of students at secondary level" was rejected.

Findings of Descriptive Statistics

1. A significant majority (66.8%) of students believed that the severity of bullying incidents is increasing, indicating strong awareness of the issue.
2. Over half of the respondents (60.8%) reported that physical bullying, such as hitting or pushing, occurs frequently in their school environment.
3. Only a small percentage (11.8%) of students agreed that cyber bullying via social media is prevalent, with a majority (62.7%) disagreeing. This suggested a perception that cyber bullying may not be as significant in public sector schools as other forms.
4. More than half (51.6%) of respondents acknowledged that social bullying, characterized by purposeful exclusion, is an issue, while a notable portion remained undecided.
5. A slight majority (52.4%) of students believed that verbal bullying, such as name-calling, occurs frequently, though a significant number (24.6%) are unsure.
6. A significant majority (66.7%) of respondents believed that bullying negatively affects students' intellectual grades, indicating a widespread recognition of its detrimental impact on academic performance.
7. Only 39.7% attributed that poor exam results directly to bullying, while 48.7% disagreed, suggesting mixed opinions on the association between bullying and academic outcomes.

8. A strong majority (73%) agreed that bullying creates a hostile learning environment, which hinders academic success, highlighting a perceived relationship between bullying and the overall educational atmosphere.
9. An overwhelming 90% of respondents acknowledged that bullying affects students' ability to concentrate on their studies, further emphasizing the adverse effects of bullying on academic engagement.
10. A remarkable 97.3% believed that effectively addressing bullying can lead to improved academic achievement, indicating a strong consensus on the importance of intervention.

Hypothesis Testing -Chi-Square Test

The p-value of .000 (p< .01) indicated a statistically significant association between the variables, suggesting that observed frequencies differ markedly from expected frequencies under the null hypothesis. The likelihood ratio analysis corroborated the findings of the Pearson Chi-Square test, confirming a significant association between the variables. The linear-by-linear association indicated a significant linear relationship between two variables, reinforcing the strength of the relationship. The strong p-values from the Chi-Square tests supported the rejection of the null hypothesis (Ho1), which stated that there is no significant association between school bullying and academic achievement among secondary level students in District Peshawar.

Regression

The estimated model was statistically significant (F = 187.812; p = 0.000), indicating a strong relationship between the independent variable (Academic Achievement) and the dependent variable (School Bullying). The independent variable Academic Achievement was found to be statistically significant (t = 13.704; p < 0.01), demonstrating its importance in relation to school bullying. The model's R² value of 0.338 indicated that school bullying accounts for 33.8% of the variance in academic achievement from the students' perspective. The positive t-value supported a direct relationship between school bullying and academic achievement, suggesting that higher levels of bullying are associated with lower academic performance. The p-value of .000 confirmed statistical significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (Ho2) that there is no significant impact of bullying on academic achievement.

Summary of Findings

The findings highlighted a strong concern among students regarding the increase in bullying severity, particularly in physical and verbal forms. While there is recognition of social bullying, cyber bullying appears less prevalent in their perceptions. The data suggests a need for targeted interventions, especially for physical and verbal bullying. The findings illustrated a clear consensus among students that bullying has significant negative effects on academic performance, particularly in creating a hostile environment and impairing concentration. While opinions on the direct link to exam results are mixed, there is overwhelming support for the idea that addressing bullying can enhance academic success. The findings revealed a strong consensus among students that bullying significantly impacts self-esteem, mental health, and emotional well-being, leading to anxiety and feelings of isolation. While there is less certainty regarding long-term emotional issues, the overall data highlighted the urgent need for effective interventions to address the multifaceted effects of bullying in schools. The findings suggested mixed perceptions regarding the school's handling of bullying and the inclusivity of the environment. While many believed the school takes bullying seriously and that a positive climate is protective, concerns about peer support and feelings of inclusion remain significant. The data highlighted the need for further improvement in fostering a truly inclusive and supportive school environment. The findings indicated significant concerns about the school's commitment to addressing bullying through awareness, effective policies, and education. While there is recognition of the positive impact of prevention programs on academic

outcomes, the overall perception is that the school lacks sufficient initiatives to raise awareness and educate students about bullying and its consequences. This points to the need for enhanced efforts in bullying prevention and education. The analysis revealed a significant association between school bullying and academic achievement, suggesting that bullying negatively impacts students' academic performance. The findings provided strong evidence against the null hypothesis, highlighting the importance of addressing bullying in educational contexts.

Discussion

The findings indicated that bullying has a significant negative impact on students' academic outcomes, supporting existing literature on the detrimental effects of bullying on educational performance.

The quantitative analysis revealed a clear inverse relationship between the frequency and intensity of bullying and academic achievement. Students who reported higher levels of bullying exhibited lower grades and academic engagement. The finding was consistent with previous studies that highlighted the psychological and emotional toll bullying takes on students, which can interfere with their cognitive functioning and academic focus (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). Bullying victims often experience increased stress, anxiety, and depression, which can lead to diminished concentration in class and a lack of motivation to complete schoolwork (Schneider et al., 2012).Additionally, students who were frequently bullied were more likely to report absenteeism, which further compounds their academic challenges. This finding aligns with research suggesting that bullying is linked to higher school dropout rates, as the negative school environment can discourage students from attending regularly (Juvonen et al., 2011).

Conclusion

Addressing bullying requires a comprehensive approach that not only tackles the behavior itself but also supports students' academic and emotional needs to foster a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. The findings reveal that verbal bullying is the most common form of bullying prevalent in schools. School bullying significantly affects students' academic achievement and overall well-being thus, showing association between the two variables. However, the moderating effect of school climate was negligible. The analysis of the sub-themes highlights that bullying is a multifaceted issue encompassing various forms of bullying with verbal and physical bullying as the most frequent one in government schools. Differentiating between conflicts and bullying is crucial for effective intervention, as is addressing common misconceptions about bullying to foster a more accurate understanding among students, educators, and parents.

The investigation underscores a clear and detrimental link between bullying and academic outcomes. Victims of bullying often experience lower grades, increased absenteeism, reduced engagement and participation, and heightened academic struggles. The stress and emotional distress associated with bullying not only hinder students' academic performance but also contribute to a diminished sense of safety and belonging within the school environment.

Recommendations

Schools may conduct comprehensive surveys or interviews to identify all forms of bullying occurring within the school environment. Regular monitoring of bullying behaviors and establishing anonymous reporting channels for students can help identify emerging trends. Schools may also implement awareness programs to educate students, teachers, and staff about different forms of bullying.

School administrations may take proactive steps to reduce bullying, as it appears to negatively affect academic performance. This may include psychological support for victims, and fostering an inclusive school environment. Teachers may also be trained to identify signs of

bullying and intervene promptly to mitigate its effects on students' learning and academic progress.

Future research may examine the role of potential mediators such as self-esteem, mental health, social support, and coping strategies, and moderators such as gender, socioeconomic status, and school environment. Schools should incorporate mental health and counseling services to address the psychological needs of students affected by bullying, helping to mitigate the negative impacts on their academic achievement.Peer support and mentorship programs that offer victims a network of allies and help reduce social isolation should be implemented.Fostering an inclusive and respectful school culture through activities, curricula, and policies should emphasize empathy, diversity, and mutual respect. Positive behavior should be recognized and rewarded, reinforcing the values of kindness and respect. Encourage open communication between parents and schools while educating parents about the effects of bullying and the value of creating a supportive home environment by holding seminars and educational sessions.Encourage programs that teach children to be kind, respectful, and inclusive. By praising and rewarding good conduct, one can strengthen the school's supportive and empathetic atmosphere.

Schools may conduct regular teacher training on the identification and management of bullying, ensuring that educators understand the forms of bullying, how to intervene, and the importance of fostering a supportive and respectful classroom environment. Teachers may also be encouraged to voice their concerns about bullying and provide input on school policies related to bullying prevention.To promote empathy and proactive reactions, regularly train educators and school personnel on how to spot bullying symptoms and implement successful intervention strategies, including the psychological impact of bullying on kids.

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