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Experience of Bullying between Genders: A Quantitative Study done at the University of New Hampshire

Kiley Schlieper

ABSTRACT

Many studies have focused on the issue of bullying; however, few have specifically done research on the experience of bullying in a college setting between genders. This study was conducted at the University of New Hampshire (UNH) where 312 undergraduates enrolled in sociology classes were surveyed. There were significant results that supported that almost half of UNH undergraduate females who reported experienced bullying also reported they have experienced being emotionally bullied by other females. UNH undergraduate males also reported a significant incidence of physical bullying perpetrated by others males. Further research, including a more representative sample would improve findings.

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the experience of bullying between college men and women. Experience was broken down between emotional bullying perpetrated by males, physical bullying perpetrated by males, emotional bullying perpetrated by females and physical bullying perpetrated by females. The sociological relevance of this study is seen with the interaction between and across genders and its effect on society. It is important to have a good understanding of bullying and where it occurs before it leads to further consequences like mental health issues or animosity between people. Gaining knowledge about which gender is experiencing which type of bullying would assist future research in solving this social issue.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bullying is an important topic that needs to be studied. The majority of studies that have been reviewed are among elementary, middle and high school students. The literature reviewed did produce similar results to the study that was conducted at the University of New Hampshire about bullying.

The types of bullying that males and females are involved in showed differences among gender. Jolliffe, Darrick and Farrington (2011) found that males were more likely to be involved in name-calling or violent bullying compared to females who were not. Jolliffe et al. did find that females who were involved in bullying generally had lower cognitive and affective empathy. Cognitive ability is defined as the ability to understand the emotions of another, and an affective trait is defined as the ability to experience the emotions of another person (Jolliffe

et al, 2011:59). Duncan and Owens (2011) note that there has been a lot of research on girls and their relational aggression, which includes psychological and emotional attacks on other girls. An example of this would be purposely ignoring a friend for no reason, which can lead to distress. These studies focused on how males experienced physical bullying and girls experienced emotional bullying. These two studies helped draw the research question for the study done at UNH. Drawing from these findings, two categories were created for the research at UNH, which include emotional and physical bullying.

Dukes, Stein and Zane (2009) do not focus their study on gender differences but rather on the effect that relational bullying has on students' attitudes, behavior and injury among students who were considered bullies, victims or bully-victims. The results of this survey found that students that report that they have neutral feelings on bullying have higher self esteem, the best school attitudes, the least problem behavior, the least injury and are the least likely to perpetrate physical bullying or to be physically bullied (Dukes et al 2009). This study shows that the victims of bullies have worse outcomes than the others who were either neutral or the bullies themselves (Dukes et al 2009). Dukes et al also found that there were more female victims of bullying but both girls and boys were still likely to participate in relational bullying (2009). This finding supports the hypothesis that UNH undergraduate women are more likely to experience bullying than UNH undergraduate men.

Limitations were found in all of these studies. Peeters, Cillessen and Scholte found that a limitation to their study was only studying one grade. Dukes et al. also found the same limitation on only studying one grade. Peeters et al. and Dukes et al. both noted that if a longitudinal study would be performed, the effect of bullying would be able to be seen over time. Jolliffe et al. saw small levels of students who said they were involved in bullying which limited their research. This was also seen as a limitation in the study at UNH. Due to the smaller number polled at UNH, there were fewer people who responded to experiencing bullying, but the data is still suggestive and if there was a more representative sample more significant results would be found.

HYPOTHESES

The null hypothesis of this study is that college women are not more likely to get bullied than college men.

The alternative hypothesis of this study is that college women are more likely to get bullied than college men/

RESEARCH METHOD

Sample

This study examines gender differences in the experience and perpetration of bullying at the University of New Hampshire. Surveys were administered to sociology students in pre-selected classes. Of the sample (N=312) a high 72.12% of respondents identified as female (N=225) while only 35.29% identified as male (N=87) (Figure 2). Close to half (40.85%) of the students were freshman, with sophomores leading second at 35.25%. There were fewer upper class students with only 17.32% juniors and a small 6.54% as seniors (Figure 1).

Figure 1

| YEAR | FREQ. | PERCENT | CUM. |
|-----------|-------|---------|--------|
| Freshman | 125 | 40.85% | 40.85 |
| Sophomore | 108 | 35.29% | 76.14 |
| Junior | 53 | 17.32% | 93.46 |
| Senior | 20 | 6.54% | 100.00 |
| TOTAL | 306 | 100.00% | |

Figure2

| | FREQ. | PERCENT | CUM. |
|--------|-------|---------|--------|
| Female | 225 | 72.12% | 72.12 |
| Male | 87 | 35.29% | 100.00 |
| TOTAL | 312 | 100% | |

Methodology, Protocols and Procedures

The protocol for this study explains the in depth research that will be performed. The setting of this project was in classrooms at UNH. The study personnel include the students of Sociology 601, Professor Glauber and teaching assistant Jessie French. The classes that were surveyed were pre selected by professor Glauber. Surveys were administered to four pre-selected classes in the sociology department. Catherine Moran, Marybeth Mattingly, Cliff Brown and UNH graduate student Justin Young agreed to let Sociology 601 students field a survey on their respective students. Beginning in November 2011 Sociology 601 students attended the preselected classrooms, stood in front of the class, read a verbal recruitment statement and handed out surveys to the students. The front page of this survey contained a consent form for students to read. Researchers did not ask for signatures from students because this survey was anonymous. The participants who agreed to complete the survey anonymously took it and then dropped it into a box at the front of the room when completed. No compensation was rewarded at the end of the survey. A convenience sample was used because it was less time consuming and easier to conduct. However, a limitation to a convenience sample is that it is not representative of the whole population intended to study and therefore lacks generalizability. Benefits of this study were that it was convenient and easy to conduct. Our limited time and budget restricted how we could conduct our study. Another benefit of this study was that it was easy to perform with results in days. Data were analyzed using quantitative methodologies. Data were collected anonymously and held in a Google Document that was only accessible by Sociology 601 students and staff members.

Risks and Benefits to Participants

Risks to subjects may be emotional or psychological harm. Bullying can be a sensitive topic to those who may have experienced traumatic events in the past, but if at any time a subject felt like they were not able to finish this survey they were able to stop. The anonymity of the students was protected by not allowing the students to place their name anywhere on the survey so they would never be able to be identified. The benefits of this survey include gained knowledge of bullying on campus so if there was a large issue there could be means to stop this in the future. Since this study was anonymous participants could choose not to answer.

RESULTS

The STATA computer program was used to produce results for this study. Research found that women are more likely to be bullied than men. 14.55% of undergraduate women responded they have been bullied compared to 8.33% of undergraduate men who reported they had been while enrolled at UNH (Figure 3 and 3a). However, this was not shown to be significant at 0.148 ($p < 0.05$). Even though these results are not significant it is suggestive that if there were a larger sample size that it would seem to be significant.

Women are more likely to be emotionally bullied by another female. It was found that almost half (46.67%) of UNH undergraduate women who responded that they had been bullied while enrolled at UNH responded that they had been emotionally bullied by another female (Figure 4 and 4a), but only 14.94% of men. This was statistically significant at 0.00 ($p < 0.05$).

Men are more likely to experience physical bullying perpetrated by other men. It was found that out of the UNH undergrad males that said they had been bullied, 13.79% responded that they had experienced physical bullying by another male, whereas only 6.67% of women experienced physical bullying by a male. This was statistically significant at 0.045 ($p < 0.05$) (Figure 5 and 5a). According to research, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that UNH undergraduate women experience more bullying than males.

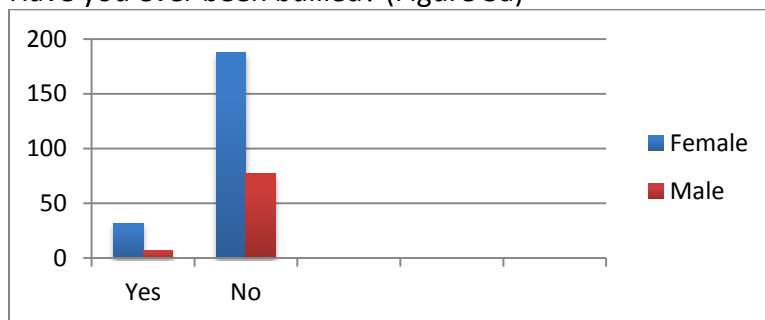
Darrick and Farrington (2011) found similar results to the study that was conducted. It was found that UNH undergraduate males were more likely to experience physical bullying by males, and Darrick et al. found that males were more likely to be involved in physical bullying. There were no results in either study that showed that females were heavily involved in physical bullying.

Have you ever been bullied? (Figure3)

| | FEMALE | MALE | TOTAL |
|-------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| YES | 32 14.55% | 7 8.33% | 39 12.83% |
| NO | 188 85.45% | 77 91.67% | 265 87.17% |
| TOTAL | 220 100% | 84 100% | 304 100% |

Chi2 (1)=2.0977 Pr=0.148

Have you ever been bullied? (Figure 3a)

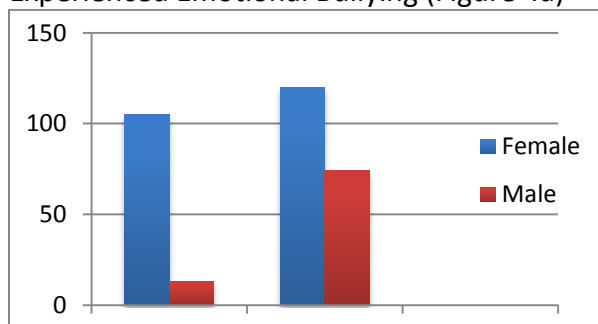


Experienced Emotional Bullying (Figure 4)

| | FEMALE | MALE | TOTAL |
|-------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| YES | 105 46.67% | 13 14.94% | 118 37.82% |
| NO | 120 53.33% | 74 85.06% | 194 62.18% |
| TOTAL | 225 100% | 87 100% | 312 100% |

Chi2 (1)=28.8505. Pr=0.00

Experienced Emotional Bullying (Figure 4a)

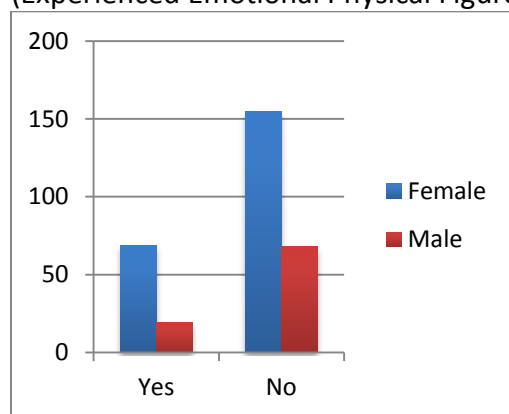


Experienced Physical Bullying (Figure 5)

| | FEMALE | MALE | TOTAL |
|-------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| YES | 15 6.67% | 12 13.79% | 27 8.65% |
| NO | 210 93.33% | 75 86.21% | 285 91.35% |
| TOTAL | 225 100% | 87 100% | 312 100% |

Chi2 (1)=4.0380 Pr=0.045

(Experienced Emotional Physical Figure 5a)



CONCLUSION

It was found that undergraduate females at UNH experienced more emotional bullying perpetrated by females (46.67%) and males experienced more physical bullying perpetrated by males (13.79%). These were both statistically significant, with the alpha level of ($p < 0.05$).

Limitations

A limitation of this study was that the sample was not representative of the population. As seen in Figure 1, a majority of the respondents were freshman and sophomores. As seen in Figure 2, 72.12% of the population studied was female which is highly skewed. This research project would be more representative if the sample was larger and had a more equal distribution of gender and grade. Another limitation of this study was what seems to be an underreported number of bullying experiences. This may be due to the fact that a student may not know what they experienced was actually a bullying behavior, and therefore did not self-report. The questions about bullying and gender were at the end of a 118-question survey, and by the end of the survey some students were rushed and did not complete the questions at the end. Therefore, a lot of data were not collected on this specific topic of bullying and gender.

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