

## **Bullying Behavior of Pakistani Pre-adolescents: Findings Based on Olweus Questionnaire**

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The current study addresses the prevalence and different forms of bullying and peer victimization among 817 students in grades 4 through 6, attending public and private sector schools in Lahore, Pakistan. Four bullying roles were identified with the help of Urdu Version of Olweus Bullying and Victimization Questionnaire (Olweus, 1993): bully only, victims only, bully-victim and uninvolved. Verbal victimization occurred most frequently among victims and bully-victims followed by rumors and exclusion; whereas bullies and bully-victims were mostly involved in verbal, exclusion and physical types of bullying. Results from Chi square revealed equal distribution of bullying roles across gender. Lower grades were associated with more involvement in bullying behavior. MANOVA results indicated significant differences across gender for certain types of victimization. More boys than girls in this sample reported being bullied by verbal, racial and sexual means. Girls outnumbered boys in excluding others, while boys were more frequently involved in verbal, physical, racial and sexual bullying as compared to girls. Cyber bullying was done by boys only. Findings from this study support strategies to increase the meaningful involvement of teachers, parents and students in bullying prevention efforts.

*Keywords.* Victimization, bullying roles, forms of bullying

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Violence and aggression have become the most serious social problem in Pakistan at present. Bullying is an aggressive act with harmful intension, repeated by perpetrator over a time period, and, prominently occurs within imbalanced relationships in terms of strength or power (Gini, 2004; Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1993). Studies have identified four groups: bullies, those who bully other children only; victims are the children who are victimized by bullies; bully-victims, who are children involved in bullying other children and also become victims of bullying, and uninvolved or neutral children (Schwartz, 2000; Solberg & Olweus, 2003; Woods & White, 2005). Little is known about bullying in Pakistan. The present research investigated the occurrence of school bullying and its various forms across gender and grades among preadolescents.

Bullying may occur in different forms (Rivers & Smith, 1994) and these forms can be broadly grouped together into two distinct modes of direct and indirect bullying. Direct bullying acts are blunt, explicit, overt and straightforward, often demonstrated in the presence of the victim and include physical and verbal harassment that is repeatedly targeted on a single victim (Olweus, 1993; Peskin, Tortolero, & Markham, 2006). Orpinas, Horne, and Staniazewski (2003) found that approximately 60% of the students reported being targets of direct bullying. Not only hitting, kicking, shoving, teasing, name calling, or humiliating (even through sexual and racial ways), but also damaging others' possessions or stealing are some practices of direct bullying. Indirect bullying is more covert and therefore mostly includes relational and cyber forms of bullying. Relational bullying or social manipulation is characterized by behaviors that aim to disturb the victims' relationships with their peers such as social exclusion (e.g. ignoring) or spreading rumors (Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield & Karstadt, 2000). Cyber bullying has also emerged as an exclusive form of bullying related to the use of communication technology (e.g. mobile, internet etc.) to deliberately harm others through hostile behavior such as sending text messages and posting nasty comments on the internet.

Cultural variations exist in bullying behaviors. In Western countries, bullying generally involves older pupils, who bully younger children, mostly by physical and verbal means (Smith, 2004). Distinctively, *wang-ta* in Korea and *ijime* in Japan involve social exclusion by large groups was found to be a more frequent form of bullying (Morita, Soeda, Soeda, & Taki, 1999; Kanetsuna & Smith, 2002; Koo, Kwak, & Smith, 2008). Different types of bullying occur at different grade levels. Researchers agree that bullying/victimization is peaked during primary school, especially in grades four to six and

that direct bullying rates decline as children grow older and become mature to use more manipulative strategies such as indirect bullying (Selekman & Vessey, 2004). Considering the high risk of bullying involvement during elementary grades, the present study focused on children studying in fourth, fifth and sixth grades.

Gender-wise prevalence of bullying behavior has indicated that boys generally exhibit more physical aggression and involved in direct bullying behaviors compared to girls. Contradictory results have been demonstrated for relational of bullying (e.g., spreading rumors, excluding from social activities and situations) as some researchers (Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Prinstein, Boergers, & Vernberg, 2001) found less pronounced gender differences, while others reported that girls who bully usually had been more engaged in indirect strategies, such as spreading rumors and imposing social isolation. The controversial gender scenario of bullying in existing literature provided another avenue to be explored within Pakistani cultural context.

Violence, aggression and behavioral problems in youth have been repeatedly recorded and addressed by several researchers in Pakistan in a variety of contexts (Hussein, 2008; Khan, Quadri, & Aziz, 2014; Sabah, Gilani, Kamal, & Batool, 2012), yet a few studies had explored the phenomenon of school bullying (Hanif, Nadeem, & Tariq, 2011). In a recent investigation, Shujja, Atta and Shujjat (2014) found male gender and public school set up as important contributors of bullying, victimization and fighting behavior. Present study aims to explore the nature and extent of bullying among preadolescents studying in Pakistani public and private sector schools. Evidence suggests that bullying associated to different forms of violence and aggression can lead to mental health problems (Arseneault, Bowes, & Shakoor, 2010) and high profile incidents of escalated violence later in life (Ttofi, Farrington, & Losel, 2012). So dealing with this issue at earlier stage can not only create safer and healthier school environment but would also affect the community at large. A comprehensive picture of different forms of bullying and victimization would also facilitate in launching evidence-based bullying prevention program in Pakistan.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

A total of 30 (15 public and 15 private sector) schools of Lahore were invited to participate in the study. Finally 12 schools; 6 public sector schools and 6 private sector schools provided their consent for participation in the current investigation. Schools however did not

allow the researcher to visit regular classes or administer the questionnaire to the whole class considering it a disturbance in school routine; rather 6-15 students were randomly selected from each class. Final sample consisted of 817 students (376 boys, 344 girls) studying in grades 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of both public and private sector schools. The children ranged in age from 9 to 14 years ( $M = 10.8$  years;  $SD = 1.08$ ).

## **Instruments**

### **Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (OBVQ; Olweus, 1996) Urdu Version**

Revised Olweus Bullying/Victim Questionnaire includes the definition of bullying, proposed by Olweus (1993), and consists of 39 questions for the measurement of different aspects of bully/victim problems. OBVQ addresses 8 types of behaviors that can be categorized into direct verbal, direct physical and indirect or relational forms of bullying. Internal consistency and test-retest reliability of the questionnaire from large representative samples (more than 5000 students) are satisfactory (Genta, Menesini, Fonzi, Costabile, & Smith, 1996; Olweus, 1997). Moreover, combinations of items for being bullied or bullying others have shown acceptable internal consistency reliabilities with values of Cronbach alpha higher than .80 (Kyriakides, Kaloyirou, & Lindsay, 2006; Panayiotis, Anna, Charalambos, & Chrysostomos, 2010).

The authors translated and adapted the questionnaire into Urdu for research purpose using standardized methods of forward and backward translation followed by the expert committee review, cognitive debriefing and pilot study. Construct validity of the Urdu version was determined and the questionnaire was found reliable ( $\alpha = .91$ ) (Khawar & Malik, 2015). This paper is based on the findings from two global measures and subsequent forms of victimization and bullying. Following a standard Olweus criteria (Solberg & Olweus, 2003), the global measures of OBVQ were used to classify the students in four bullying roles. Questions like “How often have you been bullied at school in the past couple of months?” could be answered on a 5 point scale i.e. “hasn't happened”, “once or twice”, “2-3 times a month”, “about once a week” and “several times/week”. The students who had been bullied or bullied others “2 or 3 times a month” or more often ” and responded the same to at least one way, were categorized as victims only and bullies only respectively. Bully-victim group included students who had been bullied and also bullied

others “2 or 3 times a month” or more on global measures and at least one out of eight ways. The students who had not been bullied or bullied others or replied “only once or twice” on global measures and items representing 8 ways of bullying and victimization were categorized as uninvolved or non-victims/non-bullies. Criterion for involvement in cyber bullying differed as “only once or twice” was chosen as the cut off for items 12a and 32a assess cyber victimization and bullying respectively.

### **Procedure**

Most of the schools did not allow administering the questionnaire to the whole class; therefore students were randomly selected from their class rooms. Following the systematic random sampling procedure, a list of students for each class was obtained from the attendance register. Suitable intervals were selected based on the total number of students in the class. Maximum ten students were drawn from each class and were gathered to a separate room for questionnaire administration. OBVQ was administered to a group of maximum 30 students during school hours over a 45 minutes session. Students were encouraged to reflect upon their school life during the last two to three months. Researcher read a set of standardized instructions to the respondents about filling the questionnaire. They were also provided with a definition of bullying for similar understanding of bullying phenomenon. All the items of the questionnaire were read aloud for students in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades for their better comprehension.

A passive consent procedure was employed for approval from the parents of participants, with an opportunity to withhold consent for their children’s participation. An active informed consent was also sought from participating students. The students were assured of the confidentiality of the information. They were asked to report any discomfort and were informed about the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

### **Results**

First of all, the participants were identified as bullies, victims, bully-victims and uninvolved in any kind of bullying behavior by following the cutoff “2 to 3 times a month” for item numbers 4 (being bullied global) and 24 (bullying others) of OBVQ-Urdu version. The same criterion was used to determine the involvement in the types of

victimization and bullying. Prevalence estimates are presented in percentages, while MANOVA is conducted to examine age as a covariate, continuous scores on OBVQ types of bullying perpetration and victimization as dependent variables (DVs), gender and grade of participants as independent variables (IVs).

Following table presents the total frequency and percentage of involvement in bullying and grade wise distribution of bully-victim status.

Table 1

*Distribution of Bully-Victim Status Type by Grade Level*

Grades	Bullies <i>f</i> (%)	Victims <i>f</i> (%)	Bully-Victims <i>f</i> (%)	Uninvolved <i>f</i> (%)	Total <i>f</i> (%)
4th	31(14.6)	49(23.9)	73(36.1)	52(25.4)	205(25.1)
5th	41(19.2)	36(16.9)	57(26.8)	79(37.1)	213(26.1)
6th	70(17.5)	73(18.3)	104(26.1)	152(38.1)	399(48.8)
Total	142(17.3)	158(19.3)	234(28.8)	283(34.6)	817

Table 1 showed that relatively smaller percentage of the total sample acknowledged that they were just bullies, never victims, whilst fewer of the younger participants were classified as bullies (14.6%). Most of the students were involved both in perpetration and victimization as bully-victim group constituted almost 30 percent of the sample. This group was also larger in 4<sup>th</sup> grade students compared to other two grades. Almost 19 percent participants fell into the category of victims; most of them were students of 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Uninvolved (those who were neither bullies nor victims of bullying) made up approximately 34% of this sample; overall findings in the current research study indicate that almost 65 percent of the participants had been involved in bullying behaviors.

Pearson chi square test for independence showed significant differences among students for involvement in bully-victim groups by grade levels,  $\chi^2(6, N = 817) = 16.36, p < .05$ . Males were more likely reported as bully-victims, whereas more females were categorized as uninvolved in any of the three kinds of bullying behavior. However an overall chi-square test revealed that the relationship between gender and bully-victim status type differences was nonsignificant. It showed that boys and girls were equally distributed into bully-victim groups,  $\chi^2(3) = 6.4, p = ns$ .

Table 2

*Categorical Distribution of Victimization Types across Gender and Grade Level*

Types of Victimization	Gender		Grade			Total
	Boys <i>f</i> (%)	Girls <i>f</i> (%)	4 <sup>th</sup> <i>f</i> (%)	5 <sup>th</sup> <i>f</i> (%)	6 <sup>th</sup> <i>f</i> (%)	
CMNT	124(32.8)	113(25.6)	69(33.7)	63(29.6)	105(26.3)	237(29)
CS	76(20.6)	71(16.1)	57(38.8)	36(24.5)	54(26.7)	147(18)
ENRC	92(24.4)	81(18.4)	58(33.5)	51(29.5)	64(37)	173(21.2)
HKP	63(16.7)	64(14.5)	44(34.6)	34(26.8)	49(36.8)	127(15.5)
TFA	58(15.3)	65(14.8)	38(30.9)	36(29.3)	49(39.8)	123(15.1)
MTD	58(15.3)	58(15.3)	45(38.8)	29(25)	42(36.2)	116(14.2)
SR	88(23.3)	110(25)	75(37.9)	44(22.2)	79(39.9)	198(24.2)
EI	78(19.3)	110(25)	72(38.3)	41(21.8)	75(39.9)	188(23)
C	72(19.2)	29(6.6)	24(11.7)	21(9.9)	56(14.1)	10(12.4)
Total	377	440	205	213	399	817

*Note.* CMNT = Called Mean Names Teased; SC = Sexual Comments; ENRC = Ethnic Names Racial Comments; HKP = Hit Kicked Pushed; TFA = Threatened Forced Action; MTD = Money Taken Damage; SR = Subject of Rumor; EI = Excluded or Ignored; C = Cyber.

Results in Table 2 show more boys than girls were teased and called mean names with harm and were exposed to ethnic and racial comments and cyber victimization. Social exclusion that is typically experienced by girls showed the same pattern for the current sample. Other types are almost equally distributed across gender. Verbal victimization seems to be associated with lower grade levels while students in higher grades tended to experience more physical victimization. Students especially girls were less frequently bullied by cyber means. The only significant difference between pure victim and bully-victim group was found for being threatened,  $\chi^2(1) = 11.75, p < .001$  as almost 72% of victims within this type belonged to bully-victim group.

MANOVA provides further insight to gender and grade differences for means of 8 types of victimization. Results in Table 3 show victimization by verbal,  $F(1, 811) = 15.35, p < .001$ , racial  $F(1, 811) = 12.59, p < .001$ , and sexual means,  $F(1, 811) = 17.29, p < .001$ , was significantly affected by gender as boys were more likely than girls to be called mean names and teased ( $M = 2.31, SD = 1.4$  vs.  $M = 1.71, SD = 1.1$ ), experienced nasty racial comments ( $M = 1.98, SD = 1.2$  vs.  $M = 1.97, SD = 1.3$ ) and were subjected to sexual remarks ( $M = 1.88, SD = 1.2$  vs.  $M = 1.6, SD = 1$ ).

Table 3  
*Means and Standard Deviations for Types of Victimization across Gender and Grade Levels*

Types of Victimization	Gender		Grade			Total <i>M(SD)</i>
	Boys <i>M(SD)</i>	Girls <i>M(SD)</i>	4 <sup>th</sup> <i>M(SD)</i>	5 <sup>th</sup> <i>M(SD)</i>	6 <sup>th</sup> <i>M(SD)</i>	
CMNT	2.31(1.4)	1.98(1.2)	2.18(1.3)	2.18(1.3)	2.08(1.3)	2.13(1.3)
CS	1.89(1.2)	1.62(1.1)	2.01(1.2)	1.71(1.1)	1.62(1.1)	1.74(1.1)
ENRC	1.98(1.2)	1.71(1.1)	2.04(1.2)	1.92(1.3)	1.68(1.1)	1.83(1.2)
HKP	1.67(1.1)	1.54(1.1)	1.78(1.1)	1.6(1.1)	1.5(.93)	1.59(1.1)
TFA	1.62(1.1)	1.56(1)	1.69(1.1)	1.6(.98)	1.52(1)	1.58(1.1)
MTD	1.67(1.1)	1.5(.96)	1.79(1.1)	1.62(.96)	1.5(.95)	1.6(1.01)
SR	1.95(1.2)	1.91(1.3)	2.15(1.3)	1.84(1.1)	1.85(1.2)	1.92(1.2)
EI	1.77(1.1)	1.92(1.2)	2.18(1.3)	1.72(1.1)	1.74(1.1)	1.85(1.2)

*Note.* CMNT = Called Mean Names Teased; SC = Sexual Comments; ENRC = Ethnic Names Racial Comments; HKP = Hit Kicked Pushed; TFA = Threatened Forced Action; MTD = Money Taken Damage; SR = Subject of Rumor; EI = Excluded or Ignored.

Table 3 shows nonsignificant gender differences for victimization through exclusion,  $F(1, 811) = 1.74, p = ns$ ; physical means,  $F(1, 811) = 1.62, p = ns$ ; rumors,  $F(1, 811) = .41, p = ns$ ; damage  $F(1, 811) = 1.02, p = ns$ ; and threats  $F(1, 811) = .42, p = ns$ . Grade level differences were found significant in all types of victimization except for being bullied by name calling and teasing,  $F(1, 811) = 1.34, p = ns$ ; and threatening,  $F(1, 811) = 2.06, p = ns$ . Students studying in 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades showed significant differences on victimization by exclusion,  $F(1, 811) = 9.64, p < .001$ ; physical means,  $F(1, 811) = 4.86, p < .01$ ; rumor spreading,  $F(1, 811) = 4.03, p < .01$ ; damage to property,  $F(1, 811) = 5.07, p < .01$ ; racial remarks,  $F(1, 811) = 8.11, p < .001$ , and sexual comments,  $F(1, 811) = 9.23, p < .001$ . These differences were further explored in post hoc comparisons shown in table 4.

Post hoc comparisons using LSD revealed that mean scores of students in 4<sup>th</sup> grade on all the types of victimization were significantly higher than the students studying in 6<sup>th</sup> grade ( $p < .01$ ). Significant differences between students of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades were found for mean scores on exclusion, rumors, and sexual type of victimization ( $p < .05$ ). However, 5<sup>th</sup> grade students did not significantly differ than 6<sup>th</sup> grade students on victimization types except for racial remarks.



Moreover, gender and grade interactions were found significant for damage  $F(1, 811) = 5.93, p < .01$ , and sexual,  $F(1, 811) = 5.78, p < .01$ , types of victimization.

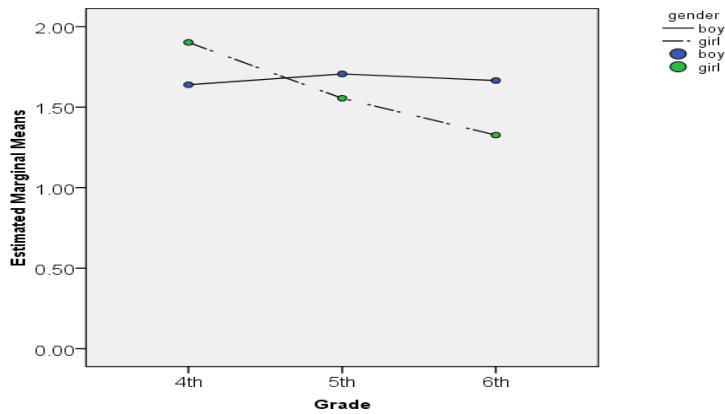


Figure 1. Grade and gender interaction on victimization by spreading rumors.

Girls of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade score higher on victimization by spreading rumors as compared to boys but this trend is decreasing with the increase in grades among girls. Boys show trend of more victimization by increase in grades.

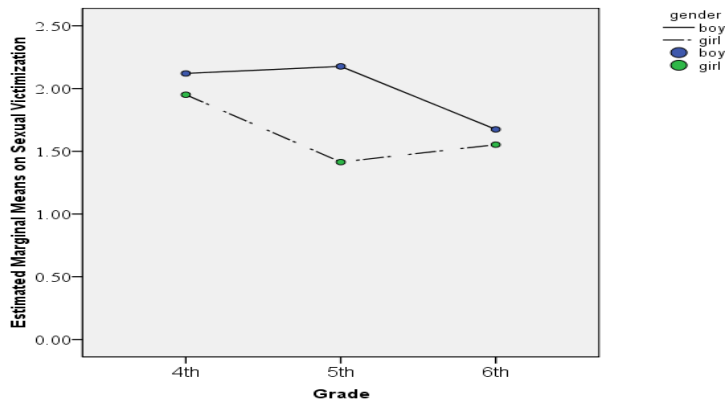


Figure 2. Grade and gender interaction effect on sexual victimization.

Overall boys experience more victimization as compared to girls. Girls in grade 4 and boys in grades 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> experienced more victimization. Boys in 5<sup>th</sup> grade reported more victimization by sexual means as compared with girls.

Table 4  
*Proportion of Participants Bullying Others by Types of Bullying*

Types of Bullying	Gender		Grade			Total <i>f</i> (%)
	Boys <i>f</i> (%)	Girls <i>f</i> (%)	4 <sup>th</sup> <i>f</i> (%)	5 <sup>th</sup> <i>f</i> (%)	6 <sup>th</sup> <i>f</i> (%)	
CMNT	133(35.3)	115(26.1)	62(30.2)	68(31.9)	118(29.6)	248(30.4)
CS	52(13.8)	43(9.8)	33(16.1)	27(12.7)	35(8.8)	95(11.6)
ENRC	70(18.6)	50(11.4)	35(17.1)	30(14.1)	55(13.8)	120(14.7)
HKP	84(22.3)	62(14.1)	45(22)	43(20.2)	58(14.5)	146(17.9)
TFA	45(11.9)	46(10.5)	38(18.5)	20(9.4)	33(8.3)	91(11.1)
MTD	42(11.1)	45(10.2)	34(16.6)	20(9.4)	33(8.3)	87(10.6)
SR	51(13.5)	75(17)	43(21)	29(13.6)	54(13.5)	126(15.4)
EI	59(15.6)	99(22.5)	48(23.4)	41(19.2)	69(17.3)	158(19.3)
C	63(16.9)	30(6.8)	27(13.3)	16(7.5)	50(12.6)	93(11.4)
Total	377	440	205	213	399	817

*Note.* CMNT = Called Mean Names Teased; SC = Sexual Comments; ENRC = Ethnic Names Racial Comments; HKP = Hit Kicked Pushed; TFA = Threatened Forced Action; MTD = Money Taken Damage; SR = Subject of Rumor; EI = Excluded or Ignored; C = Cyber.

Results in Table 4 reflect prevalence of reporting being a bully for verbal type remained highest among all types of bullying followed by exclusion and physical types. Boys were more verbally abusive compared to girls. Girls were typically more involved in relational bullying i.e. excluding others and spreading rumors, as compared to boys. Bullying appears to decrease with increasing grade level (see Table 4). Pure bullies and bully-victim group were alike for involvement in most types of bullying except for the occurrences of threatening and forced action that were significantly higher,  $\chi^2(1) = 14.15$ ,  $p < .001$ , in bully-victim group (79.1%) as compared to pure bullies (20.9%).

Multivariate Analysis of Variance identified significant mean difference across gender and grade level for the types of bullying. Table 5 shows gender and grade differences emerged for certain types of bullying. Significant gender differences were found on verbal,  $F(1, 811) = 5.59$ ,  $p < .01$ ; physical,  $F(1, 811) = 7.84$ ,  $p < .01$ , racial  $F(1, 811) = 10.71$ ,  $p < .001$ , and sexual,  $F(1, 811) = 4.51$ ,  $p < .05$ , forms of bullying with boys scoring higher on all these types as compared to girls. Boys and girls did not differ on exclusion,  $F(1, 811) = 2.57$ ,  $p = ns$ ; rumors,  $F(1, 811) = 2.57$ ,  $p = ns$ ; damage,  $F(1, 811) = 2.57$ ,  $p = ns$ ; and threats,  $F(1, 811) = 2.57$ ,  $p = ns$ .

Table 5  
*Means and Standard Deviations for Types of Bullying across Gender and Grade Levels*

Types of Victimization	Gender		Grade			Total <i>M(SD)</i>
	Boys <i>M(SD)</i>	Girls <i>M(SD)</i>	4 <sup>th</sup> <i>M(SD)</i>	5 <sup>th</sup> <i>M(SD)</i>	6 <sup>th</sup> <i>M(SD)</i>	
CMNT	2.11(1.2)	1.93(1.1)	2(1.1)	2.04(1.1)	2.01(1.2)	2.01(1.1)
CS	1.5(.94)	1.37(.86)	1.58(1.1)	1.44(.94)	1.35(.78)	1.43(.90)
ENRC	1.66(1.1)	1.41(.87)	1.59(.97)	1.51(.93)	1.49(.97)	1.52(.96)
HKP	1.7(.99)	1.51(.94)	1.77(1.1)	1.63(.93)	1.48(.91)	1.59(.96)
TFA	1.43(.85)	1.41(.88)	1.63(.99)	1.41(.85)	1.31(.79)	1.42(.87)
MTD	1.41(.87)	1.36(.83)	1.55(1)	1.37(.78)	1.3(.77)	1.38(.85)
SR	1.52(.94)	1.6(1.1)	1.71(1.1)	1.51(.97)	1.51(.99)	1.56(1.1)
EI	1.61(.98)	1.77(1.1)	1.83(1.1)	1.7(.98)	1.62(1)	1.69(1.1)

*Note.* CMNT = Called Mean Names Teased; SC = Sexual Comments; ENRC = Ethnic Names Racial Comments; HKP = Hit Kicked Pushed; TFA = Threatened Forced Action; MTD = Money Taken Damage; SR = Subject of Rumor; EI = Excluded or Ignored.

Considering the level of significance on exclusion ( $p < .06$ ), mean differences were further analyzed using  $t$  test and the results indicated significant differences between boys and girls,  $t(185) = -2.13$ ,  $p < .05$ . Girls scored higher than boys. The results showed significant grade differences on physical bullying,  $F(1, 811) = 7.28$ ,  $p < .001$ ; damaging the property  $F(1, 811) = 5.45$ ,  $p < .01$ ; threatening others,  $F(1, 811) = 8.87$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and teasing by sexual comments and gestures,  $F(1, 811) = 4.66$ ,  $p < .01$ . For other types, grade differences were found insignificant, such as verbal  $F(1, 811) = .23$ ,  $p = ns$ ; exclusion,  $F(1, 811) = 2.57$ ,  $p = ns$ ; rumors,  $F(1, 811) = 2.05$ ,  $p = ns$ ; and racial bullying,  $F(1, 811) = .74$ ,  $p = ns$ .

LSD post hoc comparisons indicated that 4<sup>th</sup> graders scored higher on rumor spreading ( $p < .05$ ), damaging the property ( $p < .05$ ), and threatening others ( $p < .01$ ), than both 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders (see figure 4), whereas significant differences were found between 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students on physical ( $p < .001$ ), and sexual bullying ( $p < .01$ ) as 4<sup>th</sup> graders again obtained higher scores on these types. This trend was also observed for perpetration through excluding others ( $p < .01$ ), though MANOVA results did not indicate main effects on exclusion.

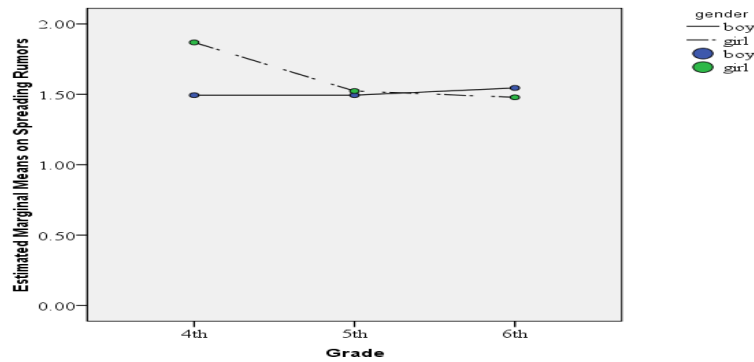


Figure 3. Grade and gender interaction effect on spreading rumors.

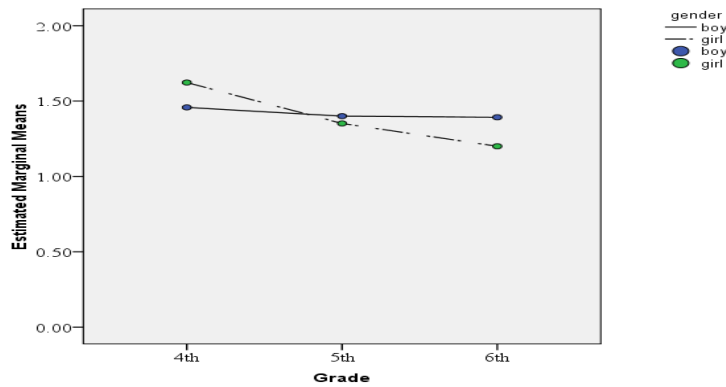


Figure 4. Grade and gender interaction effect on sexual victimization.

Gender and grade interactions were found significant for bullying by spreading rumors,  $F(1, 811) = 3.10, p < .05$ , and sexual victimization or inflicting damage  $F(1, 811) = 2.94, p < .05$  (see figure 5). Cyber bullying and victimization is reported less frequently by the sample and therefore is not included in later analysis. Larger sample size and more sophisticated assessment tool for cyber bullying can provide clearer picture.

## Discussion

Prevalence estimates are alarmingly high for bullying in Pakistani preadolescents with most of them involved in bullying as both perpetrators and targets; thus bully-victim constituted the largest group of the sample as compared to victims and bullies especially for lower grades. Fewer students reported themselves as pure bullies. Solberg, Olweus and Enderson (2007) also found a larger proportion

of bully-victims in lower grades, with bully-victim constituting about 30-50% of the total bully group. Self-report measures usually provide lower estimates of pure bullies due to the issues of personal bias and social desirability (Crothers & Levinson, 2004). Students in 4th grade were mostly categorized as bully-victims and victims. Fewer students in 5<sup>th</sup> grade were identified as victims; however they were categorized as bullies more often than 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. Being senior most in elementary section, students of grade 5 are less likely to be bullied, while more likely to become perpetrators, targeting the juniors such as students of grade 4, who either become submissive victims or reactive aggressors (Frey et al, 2005). It is important to note that a large proportion of bully-victim group belonged to 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Most of the uninvolved students belonged to 6<sup>th</sup> grade, a finding that compliments the existing evidence of decline in bullying and victimization with age and grade (Salmivalli, 2002). Boys and girls were equally assigned to four bullying roles in the present sample. Mixed findings exist for gender differences in bully-victim status types. Studies identified boys more as bullies and bully-victims while girls as passive victims, particularly at middle or secondary school stage (Kristensen & Smith, 2003; Sapouna, 2008). The case may not be true for primary grades that constituted most of the current sample.

Verbal aggression was the most frequent type experienced by victims of bullying followed by both forms of relational aggression i.e. rumors and social exclusion. Girls and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students were more frequently involved in relational bullying, while boys and 6<sup>th</sup> graders reported being bullied by cyber means more often than girls. Earlier findings also support the trend of experiencing and using more covert forms of bullying by girls and elder students (Rueger & Jenkins, 2014; Selekman & Vessey, 2004). This form is more closely associated with emotional disturbances and psychological harm to the individuals (Houbre, Tarquinio, Thuillier, & Hergott, 2006). Parents and teachers usually ignore such type of activities as they are sneaky and insidious compared to overt and prominent forms such as hitting or damage to property (Terranova, Morris & Boxer, 2008). Prevalence estimates showed an inconsistent pattern of being bullied across grades, with some forms experienced more in lower grades while others in higher grades. An increase in frequency of being bullied by racial, physical and relational means during 6<sup>th</sup> grade could be explained in terms of school transition from elementary to middle/secondary. The change over from primary to secondary school is considered to be a crucial period of development (Aikins, Bierman, & Parker, 2005) and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students being the junior most class could be more vulnerable to victimization. There is evidence for

bullying behaviors to be at peak during middle school years (Schietaure, Hayer, Petermann, & Jugert, 2006). Involvement in bullying roles and types of victimization depicted some disagreement. Mean scores on the types of victimization were analyzed to evaluate the magnitude of the problem.

Multivariate Analysis of Variance across gender and grades showed significant main effect of gender on verbal, sexual and racial form of victimization as boys scored higher than girls in all the three direct verbal forms of being bullied. Direct forms of victimization such as verbal assaults are more frequently reported by males as compared to females in different researches (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Rueger & Jenkins, 2014). The expression of verbal force against others has become our routine behavior due to lack of tolerance, so parents and teachers should not ignore it as a casual act of a youngster. Gender differences in sexual and racial victimization could be explained in terms of cultural aspects, quality and nature of peer interactions among boys and girls and differences in parental monitoring. There were equal numbers of boys and girls who were bullied by direct physical means. Lower physical victimization reports can be attributed to being more visible and noticed by elderly at school and thus is prohibited easily. Prior reports of gender and prevalence of being bullied are quite contradictory, consequently the present results cannot be suspected as unusual.

Significant main effects and post hoc comparisons suggested that the intensity of victimization was higher among students in 4<sup>th</sup> grade especially compared with 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. Younger students could be reporting either more truthfully as they are less subjected to demand characteristics or interpreting the aggressive acts of peers more sensitively than older students. Though these results are different than our findings on the prevalence estimates for victimization types, however the trend of lower reported victimization in higher grades not only compliments the proportion of bully/victim status types found in the present study, but is also consistent with the literature (Selekman & Vessey, 2004). Girls in lower and boys in higher grades suffered through damage to the belongings. Actions like stealing or destroying the stuff is a tactic to scare the target and often includes physical action which is reported to be less frequent among girls as they grow older. Boys studying in 5<sup>th</sup> grade were victimized through sexual comments and gestures, yet this difference was not significant at 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade levels.

The most commonly reported type of bullying was again calling names, and teasing in hurtful manner. Second was exclusion that was closely followed by direct physical bullying. Higher rates of verbal

and relational bullying can be associated with collectivistic cultural grounds that use more tactful and manipulative strategies of aggression rather than direct physical ones. Yet the results are not very surprising as similar findings have been reported by researchers that verbal abuse is the most common form of bullying, followed by relational and physical forms (Baldry & Farrington, 1999; Tapper & Boulton, 2005). Students in 4<sup>th</sup> grade were involved more frequently in bullying others and the trend decreased with increasing grade level. Younger children can be more accurate in reporting bullying behavior compared to more socially skilled and tactful preadolescents studying in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Students in 5<sup>th</sup> grade are usually more occupied by studies due to board exams and schools usually pay special attention to this class. So they are less frequently involved in bullying compared to 4<sup>th</sup> grade students. Researchers have supported the decrease in bullying with increasing age (Griffin & Gross, 2004; Pepler et al., 2006).

Significant gender differences have been found across gender for verbal, physical, sexual and racial bullying. Boys typically scored higher than girls on all of these types. Girls though scored higher on excluding others and ignoring but MANOVA did not yield significant results. The findings are in line with the existing studies (Card, Stucky, Sawalani, & Little, 2008) as boys are often involved in direct forms of traditional bullying whereas the differences are less clear for relational aggression. However, further analysis showed significant mean differences on exclusion as girls scored higher than boys. Abundance of literature provides substantial support to girls' over-involvement in relational bullying (Baldry & Farrington, 2000; Nansel et al., 2001). MANOVA results further indicated that 4<sup>th</sup> grade students scored higher on physical and sexual bullying, damage to property and threatening others. Again it is not unlikely to obtain such results. Despite bulk of literature supporting that bullying peaks during middle school years (Espelage, Holt, & Henkel, 2003), Olweus (1991) reported higher incidence among elementary grades. Interaction effects yielded some support to the previous reports of girls being more involved in relational bullying, as girls in 4<sup>th</sup> grade were more likely to bully others by spreading rumors than girls in 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grades. In addition, girls studying in 4<sup>th</sup> grade also inflicted more harm to belongings of peers as compared to the girls studying in higher grades.

Cyber bullying though reported less frequently was more prevalent among boys. Boys usually have easy access and exposure to electronic resources compared to girls in our culture who are more carefully and strictly reared by parents. Levels of cyber bullying are more difficult to determine, due to its distinct nature from traditional

bullying, therefore should be more deliberately assessed (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). It was also found that bully-victim group reported being threatened more as compared with victims. These threats might evoke them to react aggressively. In accordance with the finding about victimization, bully-victim group was involved more in threatening others and also damaging the property compared with bullies. Further research is needed to address social and behavioral mechanisms with regard to nature of aggression underlying bullying. For example studying the reactive/proactive aggression among bully/victim status types, gender and grades can provide further insight to the lack of evidence in differences on relational bullying in the present study). It is truly the time to move beyond mere averages as suggested by Underwood and Rosen (2011) for extending the investigations to the core factors and course of action to explicate inconsistencies that are more likely to be attributed to conceptual and methodological issues.

### **Implications**

Bullying has not been extensively explored in Pakistan. A detailed account of types could be helpful in choosing suitable approaches to countering bullying and victimization. Bullying should not be taken as an innocent, casual part of growing up. School staff and parents should be educated about the different types of bullying and its effects on students. With proper education of all stakeholders, there is likely to be a drop in school violence and related mental health issues. Long term effects could emerge in adulthood and this could have major implications on the social relationships.

### **Limitations and Suggestions**

Olweus questionnaire is a self-report usually administered to the whole class, which could not be done in the present research. This might affect the prevalence estimates of bullying and victimization. Nature of direct and indirect aggression in terms of reactive and proactive dimensions could reveal the underpinning of bullying behavior, which should be addressed in prospective studies.

### **Conclusions**

Taken together, the results suggested that self-reported bullying and victimization is higher among boys and students of elementary grades. Thus direct verbal and relational types of peer victimization



have been found common among Pakistani preadolescents. Previous studies in Asian countries have also found males than females to be involved in bullying behaviors (Kim, Koh, & Leventhal, 2005; Kshirsagar, Agarwal, & Bavedekar, 2007). The percentage of students who reported being bullied and bullying others decreased with higher grades. Younger students and boys were exposed to direct verbal assaults including abusive language, racial and sexual remarks. Boys were also more likely to bully other through physical, racial and sexual means than girls. Involvement in a variety of bullying types across gender and grade should be carefully interpreted in terms of mean differences and Olweus criteria for inclusion. Certainly, bullying emerged to be a crucial phenomenon for school-age students in Pakistan that needs special attention of parents, school staff, students, educational psychologists and policy makers. Our findings emphasize the cautious implementation of gender and age sensitive anti-bullying strategies.

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