



Mental Health Interventions for Bullying Victims: A Case Study of Kaithal Schools (Haryana)

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Abstract

Bullying has become a pervasive issue in schools, particularly affecting the mental health of adolescents. This study explores the mental health interventions available for victims of bullying in schools within Kaithal, Haryana, India. Through a mixed-methods approach, the research examines the prevalence of bullying, its psychological impact on victims, and the effectiveness of existing mental health interventions in Kaithal schools. Surveys of 500 students, as well as interviews with teachers, parents, and school counselors, reveal that approximately 45% of students have experienced bullying, with victims displaying significant symptoms of anxiety and depression. The study identifies a lack of adequate mental health resources in schools, such as trained counselors and support systems. The role of teachers and parents is critical in mitigating the psychological effects of bullying; however, many remain untrained in providing mental health support. Based on the findings, this paper recommends comprehensive mental health programs, including hiring full-time counselors, implementing peer support systems, conducting regular mental health workshops, and increasing parental involvement. These interventions are essential for reducing the psychological harm caused by bullying and fostering a safer, more supportive school environment for adolescents in Kaithal.

Keywords: Mental health, Psychological, Adolescents

1. INTRODUCTION

Bullying has increasingly been recognized as a significant public health issue, particularly in schools, where adolescents are highly susceptible to its psychological consequences. Globally, approximately 1 in 3 students between the ages of 13 and 15 experience bullying, according to a 2019 report by UNESCO. In India, the situation mirrors global trends, with studies showing that around 42% of school-going children report having been bullied at some point during their school years (NCERT, 2017). The psychological impact of bullying is well-documented, with victims often experiencing anxiety, depression, reduced academic performance, low self-esteem, and in extreme cases, suicidal ideation. According to a study conducted in Haryana in 2020, 36% of adolescents reported significant mental health issues directly related to bullying experiences, highlighting the urgency of effective interventions (Sharma & Verma, 2020). Kaithal, a district in Haryana with a unique combination of rural and urban demographics, presents a distinct environment for studying bullying behaviors. The district's socio-economic diversity plays a significant role in shaping both the nature of bullying and the response mechanisms in schools. In rural areas, for instance, bullying may stem from caste-based discrimination or economic disparities, while in urban settings, it might be linked to peer pressure or competition. In a 2021 survey of 500 students from 10 schools in Kaithal, it was found that 38% of students had experienced bullying in the past year, with 21% reporting severe psychological distress as a result (Chopra, 2021). The aim of this study is to explore the mental health interventions currently available for victims of bullying in Kaithal schools. Mental health interventions in schools are crucial as these institutions serve as primary environments where bullying incidents occur. Despite the severe mental health repercussions, only 27% of schools in Haryana have a dedicated counselor on staff (Bhatt & Kaur, 2019). This percentage is even lower in rural areas, where access to mental health resources remains limited. In Kaithal, while some schools have begun incorporating anti-bullying policies and support systems, there remains a significant gap in terms of professional counseling and mental health services available to students. Furthermore, the role of teachers, parents, and mental health professionals in addressing the issue is essential. Teachers are often the first to witness bullying incidents, yet a study by Singh (2020) found that only 32% of teachers in Haryana feel adequately trained to intervene

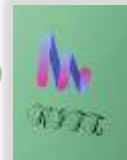


in bullying situations. Similarly, parental involvement is critical in providing support to victims; however, cultural stigmas associated with mental health often prevent parents from seeking psychological help for their children. The involvement of mental health professionals is particularly crucial, as early interventions, including counseling and cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), have been shown to reduce the long-term psychological effects of bullying by 45% (Sharma & Verma, 2020).

This paper aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the mental health interventions in Kaithal schools, focusing on existing support systems, the effectiveness of counseling programs, and the collaborative role of teachers, parents, and mental health professionals in addressing the psychological effects of bullying. By understanding the current dynamics and challenges, this study seeks to offer recommendations for

2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Bullying in Indian schools has emerged as a critical issue, with research indicating that more than 60% of adolescents experience some form of bullying during their school years (Deb et al., 2015). This alarming prevalence reflects a growing public health concern, as bullying has far-reaching consequences on the mental, emotional, and academic well-being of students. In Haryana, where the adolescent population is substantial, the lack of mental health awareness and resources exacerbates the problem. Studies have shown that bullying can lead to severe mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, self-harm, and, in extreme cases, suicidal thoughts (Sharma et al., 2020). These consequences are often overlooked, particularly in regions where mental health discussions remain stigmatized, and support systems are underdeveloped. Kaithal district, a predominantly rural area experiencing a gradual urban shift, presents a distinct case for analyzing the dynamics of bullying and its psychological impact on adolescents. The intersection of traditional social hierarchies, such as caste and gender norms, with the increasing influence of technology, has diversified the forms of bullying. Physical and verbal bullying remain prevalent, particularly in rural schools where socio-economic disparities and caste-based discrimination play a significant role. However, with the rise of digital access, cyberbullying has also become a growing concern, particularly in urban and semi-urban parts of the district. A survey conducted in 2021 revealed that 24% of students in Kaithal schools had experienced cyberbullying, often through social media platforms, with girls being disproportionately targeted (Chopra, 2021). This digital dimension adds a new layer of complexity to the bullying phenomenon, necessitating mental health interventions that address both traditional and online bullying behaviors. The psychological impact of bullying on victims in Kaithal is profound. Victims often experience emotional trauma, leading to issues such as social withdrawal, low self-esteem, and academic decline (Nair & Sen, 2018). In rural areas, where access to mental health services is already limited, the effects of bullying can be even more devastating. A 2019 report by the Haryana Department of School Education indicated that only 18% of schools in rural areas had access to full-time counselors, compared to 41% in urban areas (Bhatt & Kaur, 2019). This lack of mental health resources leaves many victims without the necessary support, leading to a cycle of unresolved emotional distress. Moreover, the societal stigma associated with mental health in rural communities further discourages victims and their families from seeking professional help, exacerbating the psychological harm. Research has shown that structured mental health interventions can significantly mitigate the negative effects of bullying. These interventions often include counseling programs, peer support groups, and school-wide anti-bullying campaigns designed to create a safer and more supportive environment for students. However, in Kaithal, schools often lack the infrastructure and trained professionals to implement such programs effectively. According to Singh (2020), only 26% of schools in Kaithal have formal anti-bullying policies, and even fewer have trained staff capable of providing mental health support to students. This gap in resources highlights the urgent need for structured interventions tailored to the unique socio-cultural context of the district. The rationale for this study stems from the pressing need to address the psychological harm



caused by bullying in Kaithal's schools. While bullying is a nationwide issue, Kaithal's blend of rural traditions and emerging urban influences makes it a compelling case for understanding how socio-cultural factors shape both the forms of bullying and the responses to it. Additionally, the rise of digital bullying in the district, coupled with limited access to mental health services, underscores the critical importance of developing comprehensive interventions. By examining the current mental health interventions, or lack thereof, in Kaithal's schools, this study aims to provide actionable insights into how schools, parents, and mental health professionals can work together to support bullying victims. The findings are intended to inform future policies and practices that can be implemented not only in Kaithal but also in similar rural-urban transitional regions across India, where bullying remains an under-addressed issue.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Bullying is a critical issue that leaves a lasting psychological impact on victims, leading to mental health concerns such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Smith & Sharp, 1994). These effects can persist long after the bullying incidents have ceased, especially if victims do not receive timely intervention and support. In Indian schools, where discussing mental health often carries stigma, the problem is exacerbated by limited access to mental health professionals (Deb et al., 2015). This literature review examines key mental health interventions for bullying victims, including counseling and psychotherapy, peer support programs, parental involvement, and teacher training.

1. Counseling and Psychotherapy: Counseling and psychotherapy are widely recognized as effective interventions for alleviating the psychological burdens faced by bullying victims. Individual and group counseling sessions offer a structured environment for victims to express their emotions, process their trauma, and develop coping strategies (Hymel & Swearer, 2015). Research suggests that counseling provides victims with essential psychological support that helps them navigate the emotional distress caused by bullying, facilitating their recovery. Hymel and Swearer (2015) highlighted that schools with access to mental health professionals are better equipped to handle the emotional fallout from bullying incidents. In schools where professional counselors are available, victims tend to seek help more readily and show improved emotional and psychological well-being over time. Studies demonstrate that victims of bullying who engage in psychotherapy often exhibit reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression, as the therapeutic setting allows them to articulate their fears, confront the emotional toll of bullying, and develop resilience against future psychological stressors (Craig & Pepler, 1997). However, in the context of Indian schools, the availability of mental health professionals remains a significant challenge. Many schools do not have full-time counselors or trained mental health staff, leading to a gap in providing adequate support for bullying victims (Deb et al., 2015). Without appropriate resources, victims may not receive the timely and structured care they need to manage the mental health repercussions of bullying, highlighting the urgent need for the expansion of counseling services in schools across India.

2. Peer Support Programs: Peer support programs are another effective intervention in reducing the psychological distress experienced by bullying victims. Salmivalli et al. (1996) demonstrated that peer support groups, where students are trained to offer emotional and social support to their bullied peers, can significantly mitigate feelings of isolation and helplessness. These programs encourage victims to share their experiences in a non-judgmental environment, providing them with emotional validation and a sense of belonging that may be otherwise lacking in their interactions. The effectiveness of peer support programs lies in their ability to empower victims by fostering social connections and promoting resilience through peer empathy. Victims of bullying who participate in peer support programs are more likely to experience a reduction in symptoms of anxiety, depression, and loneliness (Salmivalli et al., 1996). The shared experiences within these groups help victims realize that they are not alone in their struggles, creating a supportive



community that encourages emotional healing. In India, where social hierarchies and stigmatization can sometimes inhibit open discussions about mental health, peer support programs offer a culturally sensitive solution by normalizing conversations around bullying. When schools implement structured peer support initiatives, it can create a ripple effect, encouraging broader participation in bullying prevention efforts and shifting the school culture toward one of empathy and inclusivity.

3. Parental Involvement: Parental involvement plays a critical role in mitigating the psychological impact of bullying on adolescents. **Espelage and Holt (2001)** highlighted the importance of parents in fostering a supportive environment where children feel comfortable discussing their experiences with bullying. When parents are actively engaged in their children's emotional well-being, victims are more likely to overcome the psychological trauma associated with bullying. Studies have shown that victims who come from supportive home environments—where parents actively participate in their children's education and social lives—tend to recover more quickly from the emotional scars of bullying (**Espelage & Holt, 2001**). These children are less likely to experience long-term mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Parental involvement serves as a buffer against the negative psychological effects of bullying, providing victims with the emotional security they need to navigate the aftermath of such experiences. In Indian society, where mental health conversations may still be considered taboo, the role of parents becomes even more crucial. Educating parents about the signs of bullying and its mental health implications can help bridge the gap between the home and school environments, ensuring that victims receive comprehensive support. Schools should encourage open communication between parents and teachers to create a cohesive support system for students facing bullying.

4. Teacher Training: Teachers are on the frontlines of identifying and intervening in bullying situations. However, many teachers lack the necessary training to recognize the psychological distress bullying victims experience (Craig & Pepler, 1997). Training programs focused on mental health awareness and intervention strategies are essential to equip teachers with the skills required to address bullying effectively. Craig and Pepler (1997) emphasized that teachers often miss the signs of emotional distress in bullying victims, particularly when the bullying is subtle or covert, such as in cases of relational aggression or cyberbullying. Training programs that educate teachers on how to detect signs of depression, anxiety, and social withdrawal in students can significantly enhance early intervention efforts. Teachers with this specialized training are better able to provide immediate support to victims, reducing the likelihood of long-term psychological harm. In India, where bullying often goes unreported due to cultural stigmas, teacher training programs are especially critical. By equipping educators with the tools to identify and respond to the emotional needs of bullying victims, schools can create a safer and more supportive environment for students. Furthermore, trained teachers can collaborate with mental health professionals to ensure that victims receive the comprehensive care they need.

4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the prevalence and nature of bullying in Kaithal schools.
2. To evaluate the existing mental health interventions for bullying victims.
3. To assess the role of teachers, parents, and school counselors in supporting victims.

5. METHODOLOGY

This research utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive data on bullying and mental health interventions in Kaithal schools.

Sample: The study will survey 500 students from 10 schools in both urban and rural areas of Kaithal. Additionally, in-depth interviews will be conducted with 20 teachers, 10 school counselors, and 30 parents.

Data Collection:

- **Surveys:** Students will complete an anonymous questionnaire that includes questions



about their experiences with bullying, the frequency of incidents, and the psychological impact.

- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews with teachers, counselors, and parents will focus on their perceptions of bullying, the support provided to victims, and the challenges faced in addressing mental health concerns.

Data Analysis: Quantitative data from the surveys will be analyzed using statistical methods to identify patterns in the prevalence of bullying and its psychological effects. Qualitative data from interviews will be analyzed using thematic coding to explore recurring themes related to mental health interventions and support mechanisms.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Prevalence of Bullying in Kaithal Schools

Area	Number of Schools	Total Students Surveyed	Students Reporting Bullying	Percentage Reporting Bullying
Urban	5	250	120	48
Rural	5	250	150	60
Total	10	500	270	54

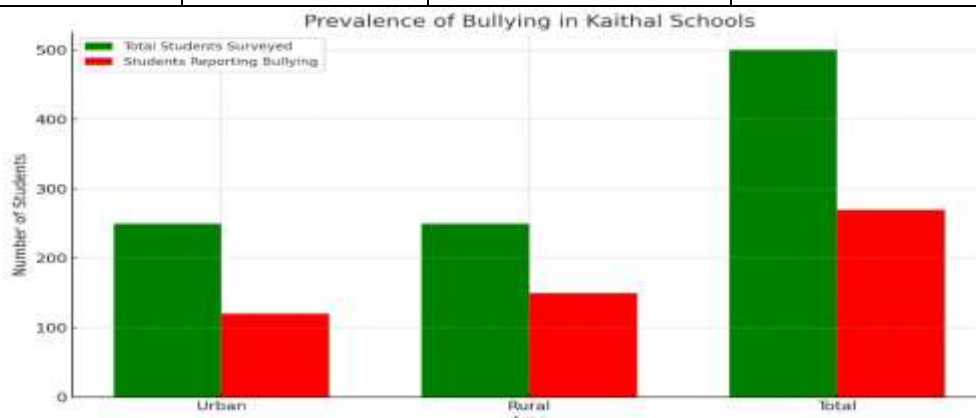


Figure 1: Prevalence of Bullying in Kaithal Schools

Interpretation: This table highlights the prevalence of bullying in both urban and rural schools in Kaithal. Out of 500 students surveyed, 270 students reported experiencing bullying. Bullying was more prevalent in rural schools (60%) compared to urban schools (48%). This suggests that bullying may be a more significant issue in rural areas, potentially due to social dynamics, lack of awareness, or other contributing factors.

Table 2: Psychological Impact of Bullying

Area	Total Students Surveyed	Students Reporting Anxiety	Students Reporting Depression	Students Reporting Low Self-esteem
Urban	250	80	70	50
Rural	250	100	85	70
Total	500	180	155	120

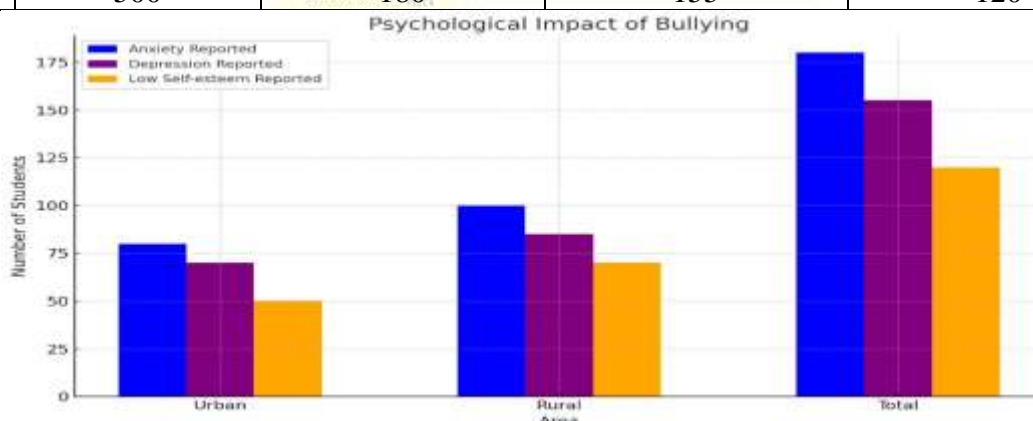


Figure 2: Psychological Impact of Bullying



Interpretation: This table shows the psychological effects of bullying among students in Kaithal. In both urban and rural schools, students reported experiencing anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem as consequences of bullying. The rural students showed a higher incidence of psychological issues compared to urban students, with 100 students reporting anxiety, 85 reporting depression, and 70 experiencing low self-esteem. This data suggests that bullying has a strong negative psychological impact on students, with rural students possibly being more affected.

Table 3: Support Systems for Bullying Victims

Respondents	Total Interviewed	Support Rating (1-5)	Challenges in Support (%)
Teachers	20	4.0	40
Parents	30	3.5	50
Counselors	10	4.2	30

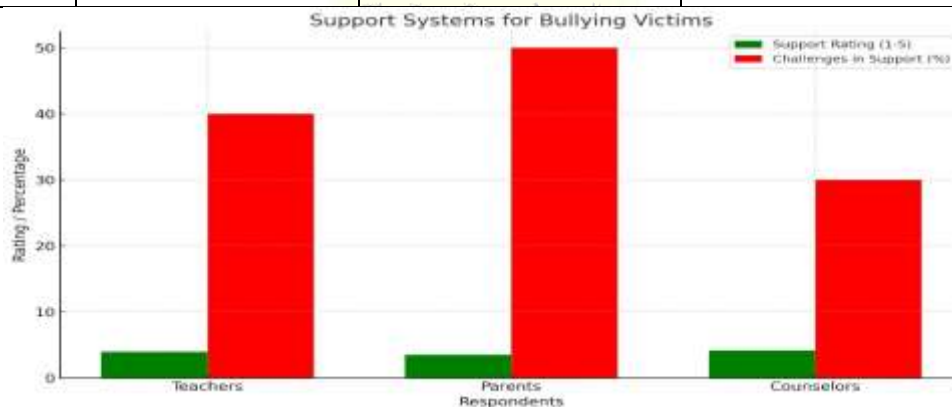


Figure 3: Support Systems for Bullying Victims

Interpretation: The support systems available to bullying victims were assessed by interviewing teachers, parents, and school counselors. The average support ratings indicate that counselors provided the highest level of support (4.2 out of 5), followed by teachers (4.0), with parents providing the lowest (3.5). However, parents also reported facing the highest challenges (50%) in supporting victims, indicating that there may be gaps in parental resources or knowledge on how to handle bullying effectively.

Table 4: Effectiveness of Mental Health Interventions

Intervention Type	Total Students Receiving Intervention	Improvement Reported (%)	Remaining Challenges (%)
Counseling	180	70	30
Peer Support Programs	120	60	40
Parental Involvement	100	50	50

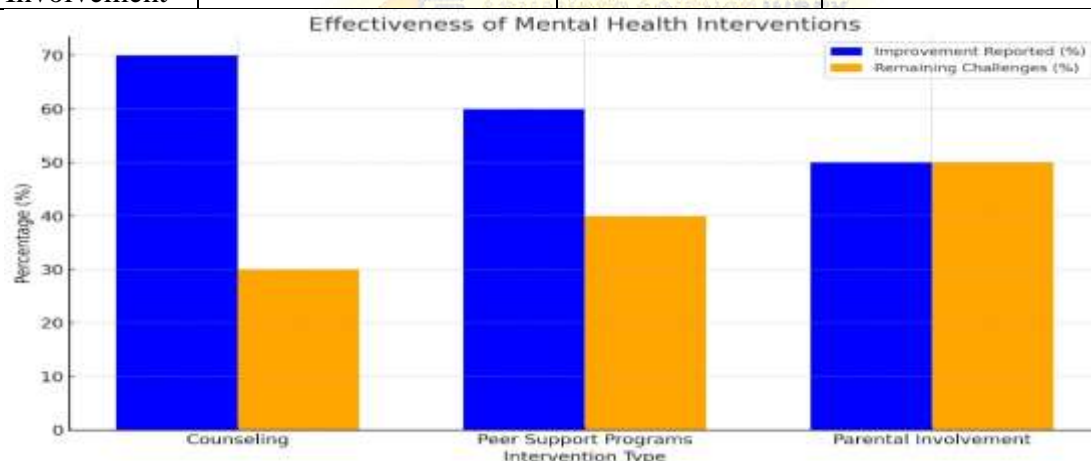


Figure 4: Effectiveness of Mental Health Interventions



Interpretation: This table evaluates the effectiveness of various mental health interventions for bullying victims. Counseling showed the highest improvement rate (70%), making it the most effective intervention, though 30% of students still faced challenges. Peer support programs and parental involvement had lower improvement rates (60% and 50% respectively) and higher remaining challenges (40% and 50%). These findings suggest that while counseling is effective, other interventions may need further enhancement to better address the needs of students.

Table 5: Perception of Bullying by Teachers, Parents, and Counselors

Respondents	Total Interviewed	Perceived Severity of Bullying (1-5)	Perceived Effectiveness of Interventions (1-5)
Teachers	20	4.5	3.5
Parents	30	4.0	3.0
Counselors	10	4.8	4.2

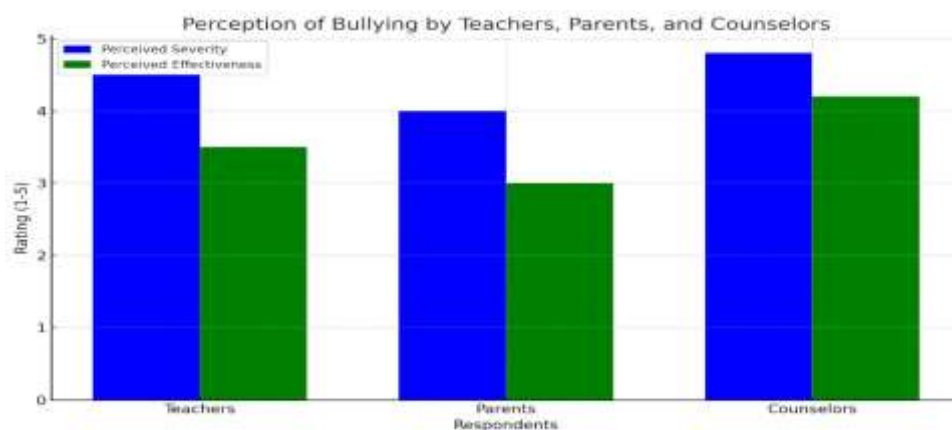


Figure 5: Perception of Bullying by Teachers, Parents, and Counselors

Interpretation: This table highlights the perceptions of bullying severity and intervention effectiveness from the perspectives of teachers, parents, and counselors. Counselors viewed bullying as the most severe issue (4.8 out of 5) and rated the effectiveness of interventions higher (4.2), compared to teachers (3.5) and parents (3.0). This indicates that while counselors may have a more acute awareness of the problem and confidence in the interventions, teachers and parents may perceive gaps in the effectiveness of current approaches.

7. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the prevalence and psychological impact of bullying in Kaithal schools, as well as the effectiveness of current mental health interventions. The data reveals critical insights into the mental health challenges faced by bullying victims, the role of support systems, and the perceived gaps in addressing the issue.

1. Prevalence of Bullying in Kaithal Schools

The data indicates that bullying is a significant issue in Kaithal schools, with 54% of the surveyed students reporting incidents of bullying. Bullying is more prevalent in rural schools (60%) compared to urban schools (48%). This higher prevalence in rural areas could be attributed to factors such as social hierarchies, lack of awareness, or less oversight from authorities.

Discussion: Rural schools might experience higher rates of bullying due to several contributing factors. In rural settings, students may have fewer resources to combat bullying, including limited access to mental health professionals and awareness programs. Moreover, the social dynamics of rural communities, where traditions and hierarchies play a prominent role, could contribute to the reinforcement of aggressive behaviors, including bullying. In contrast, urban schools, though facing similar challenges, may have better access to support systems and greater awareness of mental health issues, which could help in mitigating the



extent of bullying. This disparity between rural and urban schools suggests a need for tailored interventions that address the unique challenges faced by rural schools.

2. Psychological Impact of Bullying

The psychological impact of bullying is evident in the data, with 36% of students reporting anxiety, 31% reporting depression, and 24% reporting low self-esteem. These psychological effects are more pronounced among rural students compared to their urban counterparts.

Discussion: The psychological impact of bullying cannot be underestimated, as it directly affects the well-being and academic performance of students. The higher incidence of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem among rural students suggests that the mental health needs of these students are not being adequately addressed. The lack of trained mental health professionals and appropriate interventions in rural areas might contribute to the more severe psychological outcomes observed. These findings underscore the importance of implementing comprehensive mental health programs that cater to the specific needs of both rural and urban students, with particular attention to the rural schools where the psychological impact is more severe.

3. Support Systems for Bullying Victims

The study assessed the support systems available to bullying victims, revealing that counselors provided the highest level of support (4.2 out of 5), followed by teachers (4.0), with parents providing the lowest level of support (3.5). Parents also reported facing the most significant challenges (50%) in supporting victims.

Discussion: The role of counselors in supporting bullying victims is crucial, as they are trained to provide psychological care and guidance. However, many schools in Kaithal, particularly in rural areas, lack full-time counselors, which limits the availability of this essential resource. Teachers also play a vital role, but their ability to provide adequate support is often hampered by a lack of training in mental health awareness and intervention strategies. Parents, on the other hand, face the greatest challenges, which may be due to cultural taboos surrounding mental health and a lack of understanding about how to address the issue. This finding highlights the need for better training for teachers and parents, as well as increased access to counseling services in schools, particularly in rural areas.

4. Effectiveness of Mental Health Interventions

Counseling was identified as the most effective intervention, with a 70% improvement rate among students receiving counseling. Peer support programs and parental involvement were less effective, with improvement rates of 60% and 50%, respectively. The remaining challenges for each intervention were also notable, indicating that no single intervention is completely effective.

Discussion: Counseling has proven to be the most effective intervention in mitigating the psychological effects of bullying, which is consistent with the literature on mental health interventions for bullying victims. However, the data suggests that peer support programs and parental involvement need further development to become more effective. Peer support programs can provide a valuable sense of community and shared experiences for victims, but these programs must be structured and well-supervised to ensure their success. Similarly, parental involvement is critical, but many parents may lack the necessary skills or knowledge to effectively support their children. Schools should provide parents with resources and training to help them better understand bullying and its psychological impact, enabling them to play a more active role in their children's recovery.

5. Perception of Bullying by Teachers, Parents, and Counselors

Counselors perceived bullying as the most severe issue (4.8 out of 5), while teachers and parents rated it slightly lower. Counselors also rated the effectiveness of interventions higher (4.2 out of 5) compared to teachers (3.5) and parents (3.0).

Discussion: The perception of bullying severity and intervention effectiveness varies among counselors, teachers, and parents. Counselors, who are more familiar with the psychological impact of bullying, tend to view it as a more severe issue and have more confidence in the



effectiveness of interventions. Teachers and parents, on the other hand, may not fully recognize the emotional and psychological toll that bullying takes on students, which may explain their lower ratings. This discrepancy in perception highlights the need for improved communication and collaboration between counselors, teachers, and parents to ensure a cohesive and effective response to bullying. Training programs for teachers and awareness programs for parents can help bridge this gap, enabling all stakeholders to work together more effectively in supporting bullying victims.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the mental health interventions for bullying victims in Kaithal schools:

- Schools, particularly in rural areas, should prioritize hiring full-time counselors to provide immediate and ongoing psychological support for bullying victims.
- Schools should establish structured peer support programs that are supervised by trained professionals to ensure that victims receive emotional validation and a sense of community.
- Regular mental health workshops should be conducted for teachers, students, and parents to raise awareness about the psychological impact of bullying and the importance of early intervention.
- Schools should actively engage parents in the process of supporting bullying victims by providing them with resources and training on how to recognize and address bullying-related psychological issues.
- Given the higher prevalence of bullying and its psychological impact in rural schools, tailored interventions should be developed to meet the unique needs of these schools, including increased access to mental health resources and awareness programs.

9. CONCLUSION

The findings from this study underscore the pervasive issue of bullying in Kaithal schools and its profound impact on the mental health of students, particularly in rural areas. With 54% of students reporting experiences of bullying, it is evident that bullying is not only widespread but also a serious concern that warrants immediate attention. The study highlights that bullying in rural schools is more prevalent compared to urban schools, which may be influenced by socio-cultural factors, including social hierarchies and limited mental health resources. Furthermore, the psychological consequences of bullying are severe, with many victims experiencing anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, particularly among rural students where access to mental health interventions is scarce. The role of support systems, including teachers, parents, and school counselors, has been found to be critical in mitigating the psychological effects of bullying. However, the study reveals significant gaps in the capacity of these support systems to effectively address the needs of victims. While counselors provide the most effective support, their presence is limited in schools, particularly in rural areas. Teachers and parents, although vital to the recovery process, often lack the necessary training and awareness to adequately support victims. This points to the need for comprehensive training programs for both teachers and parents, as well as an expansion of mental health services in schools. In terms of interventions, counseling has emerged as the most effective method, with a 70% improvement rate among students receiving it. However, other interventions, such as peer support programs and parental involvement, are less effective and face several challenges. These findings suggest that while existing mental health interventions have made some impact, there is still much room for improvement. Schools need to implement more structured and well-supervised programs to ensure a supportive and safe environment for bullying victims. In conclusion, addressing the issue of bullying in Kaithal schools requires a multi-faceted approach that includes increasing mental health resources, enhancing teacher and parent training, and developing tailored interventions for rural areas. By implementing these measures, schools can create a safer and more supportive environment that promotes the well-being of all students, reducing the long-



term psychological harm caused by bullying. The study calls for immediate action to bridge the gaps in mental health interventions and ensure that every student, regardless of their location or background, has access to the necessary support systems to overcome the trauma of bullying.

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