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## Research in Developmental Disabilities



Review article

## Prevalence and correlates of bullying perpetration and victimization among school-aged youth with intellectual disabilities: A systematic review

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## ABSTRACT

Recent literature reviews show that bullying perpetration and victimization are major public health concerns for typically developing (TD) youth. Nevertheless, the magnitude of this phenomenon among youth with intellectual disabilities (ID) remains unclear. Therefore, the purpose of this review is to provide a synthesis of the empirical studies examining the prevalence and correlates of bullying perpetration and victimization among youth with ID. A systematic literature search was performed and 11 studies met the inclusion criteria. The findings from these studies showed weighted mean prevalence rates of general bullying perpetration, bullying victimization and both of 15.1%, 36.3%, and 25.2%, respectively. Weighted mean prevalence rates of bullying perpetration and victimization differed according to the characteristics of the studies (e.g., assessment context, school setting, information source, type of measures, time frame). Additionally, high weighted mean prevalence rates of physical (33.3%), verbal (50.2%), relational (37.4%), and cyber (38.3%) victimization were found among youth with ID. When youth with ID were compared to youth with other disabilities or TD peers, no clear differences were found. Finally, the present review shows that correlates of bullying perpetration and victimization in this population remain understudied.

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Bullying can be defined as a form of aggressive behavior that is intentional, repetitive, and causing harm, distress or discomfort to someone else (Olweus, 2013). It differs from aggression, conflict and violence by its repetitive nature, or the high likelihood that it will be repeated, and by the dynamic interaction involved between at least two persons (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014; Juvonen & Graham, 2014; Marsh et al., 2011). More precisely, bullying implies a relational power imbalance where a bully acts negatively toward a victim who can hardly defend him or herself (Solberg, Olweus, & Endresen, 2007). Although bullying occurs in multiple settings, it is most often studied in school settings (Juvonen & Graham, 2014). Youth can be involved in bullying as perpetrators (bully), victims (bullied), perpetrators and victims (bully-victim), or bystanders/witnesses (Vessey, DiFazio, & Strout, 2013).

Bullying can be either direct or indirect (Olweus, 2013). Direct bullying comprises physical (e.g., hitting, pushing, kicking and hair pulling) and verbal (e.g., name calling, teasing, laughing at and ridiculing) forms of intentional negative behaviors. Indirect or relational bullying consists of exclusion or social isolation (e.g., barring from a group, keeping or leaving out and shunning), lying, talking behind one's back, spreading rumors or manipulating relationships (Juvonen & Graham, 2014; Olweus, 2013). Cyber-bullying may also occur (e.g., hurtful text messaging or emailing). All these forms of bullying can be assessed (Crothers & Levinson, 2004) using various methods (observation, interview, sociometric measures, questionnaire) and sources (self-reports, parents, teachers, or peers).

## 1. Bullying perpetration and victimization in youth with disabilities

Recent reviews examining the prevalence rates of bullying perpetration and victimization among youth with disabilities have focused mainly on specific disabilities (e.g., emotional disabilities, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorders; Carter & Spencer, 2006; Cummings, Pepler, Mishna, & Craig, 2006; Mishna, 2003; Rose, Monda-Amaya, & Espelage, 2011; Thompson, Whitney, & Smith, 1994), chronic conditions (e.g., chronic diseases, weight problems; Sentenac et al., 2012), and autism spectrum disorders (Schroeder, Cappadocia, Bebko, Pepler, & Weiss, 2014; Sreckovic, Brunsting, & Able, 2014). Overall, results from these reviews show that youth with various types of disabilities present higher levels of bullying perpetration and victimization than their peers without disabilities (Carter & Spencer, 2006; Cummings et al., 2006; Mishna, 2003; Rose et al., 2011). For example, in one reviewed study, up to 100% of students with hearing impairments reported being victimized, while in another one, 68.6% of students from special education classes reported bullying others (for more details see Carter & Spencer, 2006; Rose et al., 2011). This heightened risk has been attributed to the putative negative effects of some youth's characteristics, including their (a) visible traits, such as physical appearance, academic performance or inappropriate behaviors; (b) limited social network or unstable friendships; and (c) deficits in social and problem-solving skills (Carter & Spencer, 2006; Cummings et al., 2006; Mishna, 2003; Rose et al., 2011).

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