



## FEATURED INSIGHTS

DELIVERING CONSUMER CLARITY

# THE LASTING EFFECTS OF CHILDHOOD BULLYING

## THE PREVALENCE OF CHILDHOOD BULLYING AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS THROUGH LIFE

- According to a **Global School Based Students Health Survey (GSHS)** carried out in developing countries by the **UN**, **20% to 65%** of children aged **13-15 years** have reportedly been bullied verbally and physically in the last 30 days.
- Despite its widespread prevalence, **India** has, to date, focused its efforts on addressing only more severe forms of child abuse.
- Research suggests that children who bully or are victims of bullying are more likely to accept and perpetrate acts of violence later in life.

Many of us may recall an instance of being bullied when we were young. Unfortunately, for many, these unpleasant experiences aren't just a distant memory. In fact, they've adversely affected their relationships well into adulthood.

Bullying, or the abuse of power to distress or control another person, is prevalent across societies and circumstances the world over. Childhood bullying is defined as an intentional unprovoked abuse of power by one or more children in order to inflict pain or cause distress to another child on repeated occasions<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Dan Olweus (1997): Bully/Victim Problems in School: Facts and Intervention European Journal of Psychology of Education, University of Bergen, Norway [December 1997, Volume 12, Issue 4, pp 495-510]

## FORMS OF BULLYING



**VERBAL** (NAME CALLING, TEASING)



**SOCIAL** (SPREADING RUMOURS, LEAVING PEOPLE OUT OF GROUPS ON PURPOSE, BREAKING UP FRIENDSHIPS)



**PHYSICAL** (HITTING, PUNCHING, SHOVING, WHICH TYPICALLY HAPPENS IN SCHOOLS)



**CYBER BULLYING** (HARASSMENT ON SOCIAL NETWORKS, OTHER DIGITAL PLATFORMS)



Bullying is linked to many negative outcomes, such as:

- Victims are at increased risk of depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties and poor school/social adjustment.
- Those who bully others are at increased risk for substance use, academic problems and violence later in adolescence and adulthood.
- Bullies and victims are at greater risk for both mental health and behaviour problems.
- Exposure to bullying has been found to lead to an increased risk of health (physical and psychological), poor social relationships and domestic violence.

**MORE THAN 60% OF SCHOOL STUDENTS WERE AWARE OF BULLYING AS A PHENOMENON AND 10% TO 30% OF THEM ADMITTED TO EITHER BULLYING OR HAVING BEEN BULLIED BY OTHERS.**

## CHILDHOOD BULLYING AROUND THE WORLD

Childhood bullying is a world-wide malaise. According to a global school-based student health survey conducted by U.N. agencies, 20% to 65% of children have reportedly been bullied verbally and physically in the last 30 days (GSHS, 2003-05)<sup>2</sup>. In South Asia, World Health Organisation (WHO) surveys among school students aged 13-15 years in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, revealed that more than 45% of the boys and 35% of girls have been bullied in the last 30 days (2009, WHO – Global School-based Student Health Survey).



THE NATIONAL CONSCIENCE HAS YET TO FOCUS ON THE SEVERITY OF CHILDHOOD BULLYING AS A PUBLIC HEALTH HAZARD, AS A RESULT OF WHICH THE ISSUE IS LESS RESEARCHED, AND THE DATA IS SCARCE.

## THE PREVALENCE OF BULLYING IN INDIA

There have been very few studies in India that have focused on studying this malaise. In one such study, bullying was reported by 31% of school children between the ages of 8 and 12 years in rural India<sup>3</sup>.

While there is no systematic study conducted on childhood bullying in India, some data on bullying has got reflected in the research work funded by organisations like UNICEF which promotes rights and well-being of children, the UNFPA, which supports initiatives enabling involvement of boys and men in furthering gender equality and the ICRW which conduct empirical research and advocates evidence-based, practical ways to change policies and programmes.

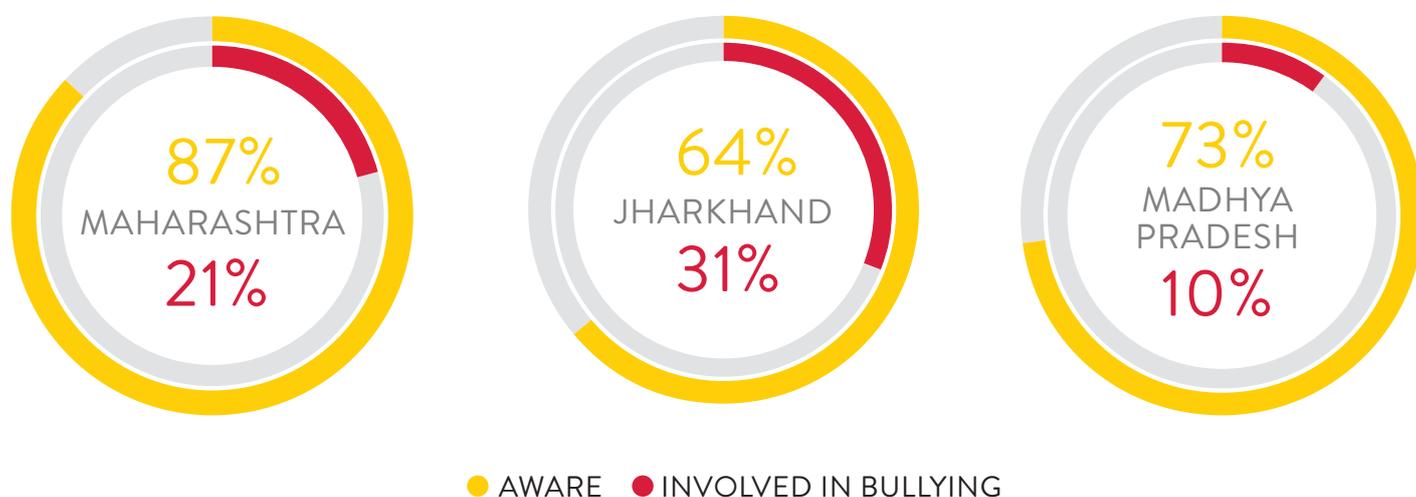
A baseline study carried out by Nielsen for UNICEF's Meena Radio programme in rural government schools among children aged 11-14 years, showed that more than 60% of school students were aware of bullying as a phenomenon and 10% to 30% of them admitted to either bullying or having been bullied by others. In more than 50% of the cases, children we spoke to said bullying typically led to fights and quarrels leaving them scared<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Analysis provided to the Study by the Global School-based Student Health Survey: The World Health Organization (<http://www.who.int/chp/gshs> or <http://www.cdc.gov/gshs>) for surveys conducted in 2003–5 for Botswana, Chile (metropolitan area), China (Beijing), Guyana, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Namibia, Oman, Philippines, Swaziland, Uganda, UAE, Venezuela (Lara), Zambia and Zimbabwe (Harare).

<sup>3</sup> Bullying in School prevalence and Short-term Impact – V.Y. Kshirsagar, Rajiv Agarwal and Sandeep B Bhavdekar (2007). Indian Paediatrics 2007:44:25-28

<sup>4</sup> Meena Radio Baseline Reports (Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh), 2012, Studies sponsored by UNICEF India Office

## PREVALENCE OF BULLYING AMONG RURAL SCHOOL STUDENTS AGED 11-14 YEARS (2012)



Source: Study done by Nielsen for UNICEF, 2012

### THE BACKSTORY OF CHILDREN INVOLVED IN BULLYING

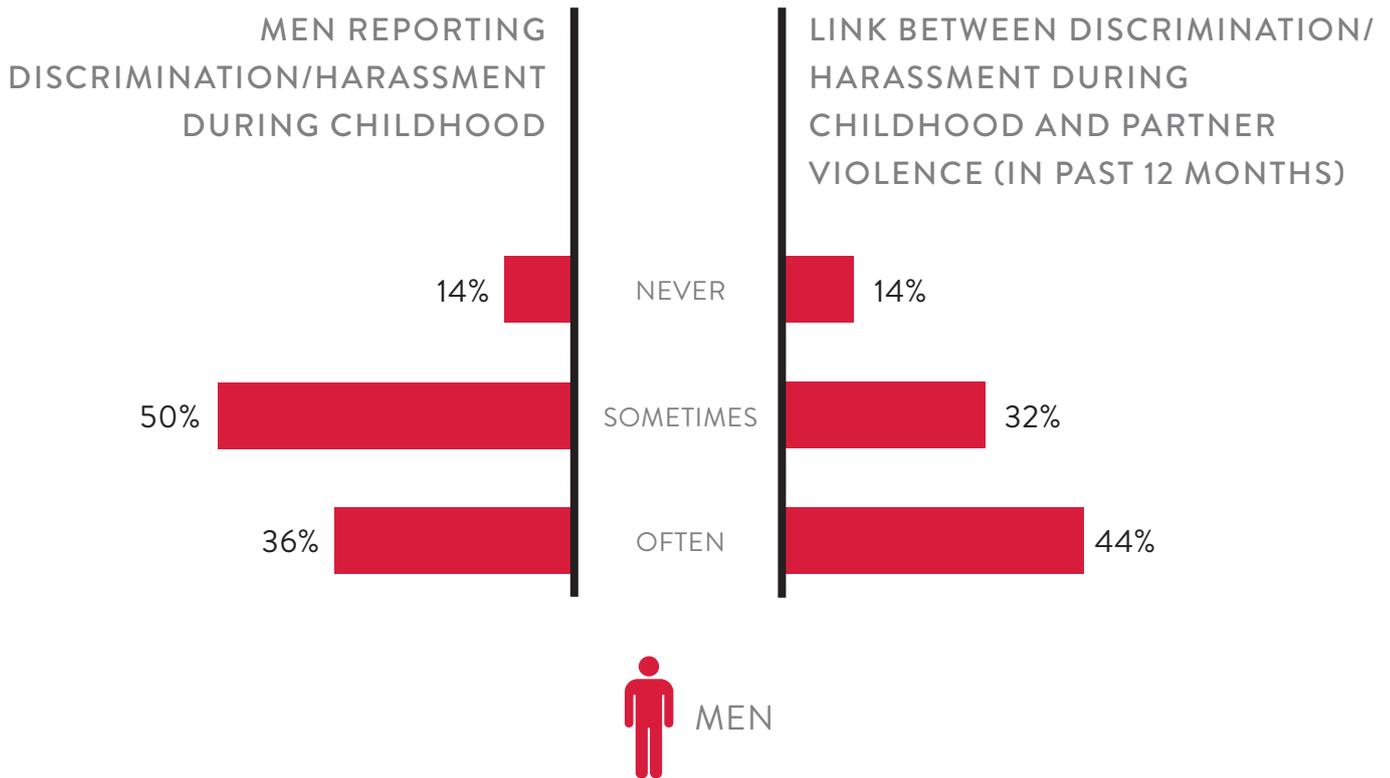
The impact that childhood bullying can have during adulthood can be better understood with the help of retrospective surveys. These surveys compare the findings based on the data collected from individuals who have been involved in bullying, either as bullies or as victims during their growing up period with those who have not been involved in bullying. In fact, studies carried out in developed countries indicate that those who have been victimised at school were significantly lonelier and had problems in relationships with opposite sex in their adulthood<sup>5</sup>.

A recent survey conducted by Nielsen for ICRW/UNFPA covering 9,000 men aged 15 to 49 years, across the seven states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra made retrospective enquiries into their lives before they turned 18 years old. The findings revealed that a staggering 86% of the men reporting either their own experiences or witnessing incidents of discrimination or harassment during their adolescent years. The questions to assess discrimination addressed a range of issues from beating, sexual abuse and bullying to observing domestic violence<sup>6</sup>.

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SCARED.**

<sup>5</sup> Ken Rigby (2003) Consequences of Bullying in School – A Review, Can J Psychiatry, Vol. 48, No 9, The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry.

<sup>6</sup> ICRW/UNFPA (2014): Masculinity, Intimate Partner Violence and Son Preference in India, [http://www.icrw.org/sites/default/files/publications/Masculinity%20Book\\_Inside\\_final\\_6th%20Nov.pdf](http://www.icrw.org/sites/default/files/publications/Masculinity%20Book_Inside_final_6th%20Nov.pdf)



Source: Study by Nielsen for ICRW/UNFPA, 2012

The survey conducted by Nielsen and data analyzed and published by ICRW/UNFPA also observed that exposure to violence and discrimination during childhood lead to boys internalising bullying as acceptable behaviour. This is reflected in their behaviour – as adults –towards their partners with 44% admitting to doing violence in past 12 months as compared to 14% of men who had not experienced any discrimination during childhood.

## FATAL CONSEQUENCES?

Disturbingly, studies reflect a link between bullying and suicidal thoughts. Not only does the victimization have harmful effects in life, studies have shown that men who were once bullies, were significantly more likely than others to experience higher levels of depression and more prone to exhibit suicidal behavior<sup>7,8</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Kaltiala-Heino et.al. (1999) Bullying, depression, and suicidal ideation in Finnish adolescents: school survey, *BMJ* 1999;319:348

<sup>8</sup> Rigby K, Slee PT. Suicidal ideation among adolescent school children, involvement in bully victim problems and perceived low social support. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behaviour* 1999;29:119–30

## CYCLICAL EFFECTS OF BULLYING

Insights based on limited data in India indicate that bullying might have psycho-social impact on children and later in their lives. While building up this evidence in India is important, there have been studies in the developed countries which indicate that the effects of childhood bullying are cyclical and likely to continue into adulthood.

Even with limited data available on the issue, it's evident that the bullying phenomenon is depressingly repetitive and not easy to disassociate from. Children who witness domestic violence at an early age are at a higher risk of becoming both bullies and victims of bullying. Conversely, children who bully, or are victims of bullying, are more likely to accept acts of violence later in life.



India is increasingly becoming cognisant of the fact that bullying is prevalent across different societies, age groups and situations. Nipping this issue right at the bud, calls for coordinated support and vigilance from all – the children themselves, parents and teachers. A general call to action would be to generate enough evidence and data on childhood bullying through research, sensitise ourselves about the gravity of the situation, its cyclical or lasting effects, create an environment where the issue can be discussed openly and adopt recommended practices that organizations catering to children’s welfare are advocating.

## THE NIELSEN QUALITATIVE VIEW

### IMPACT OF CHILDHOOD BULLYING

BY: SARBANI SEN, DIRECTOR, NIELSEN INDIA

- Childhood bullying can severely impact victims and manifest as low self-esteem and sometimes even lead to self-imposed social isolation during later years.
- With men, bullying is more about ‘territorial’ command and ‘demarcation of power.’ It is a twisted expression of masculinity especially in a patriarchal society where there is social legitimacy for abusive display of strength.
- In a country where young boys are told that they are not supposed to cry, (cf. the recent Vogue India campaign on women’s empowerment), the ability to discuss this problem is virtually absent.
- Awareness programmes and counselling is critical to ensure that young victims of bullying don’t blame themselves for the trauma they suffer. Additionally, steps must be taken to make victims as well as bullies aware that outside intervention is possible to address the issue.
- Combating bullying requires sensitisation among everyone involved – right from children (both victims and perpetrators) to their guardians and teachers and educate them to address it with sensitively.

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## ABOUT NIELSEN

Nielsen Holdings plc (NYSE: NLSN) is a global performance management company that provides a comprehensive understanding of what consumers watch and buy. Nielsen's Watch segment provides media and advertising clients with Total Audience measurement services for all devices on which content — video, audio and text — is consumed. The Buy segment offers consumer packaged goods manufacturers and retailers the industry's only global view of retail performance measurement. By integrating information from its Watch and Buy segments and other data sources, Nielsen also provides its clients with analytics that help improve performance. Nielsen, an S&P 500 company, has operations in over 100 countries, covering more than 90% of the world's population.

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