

# Exploring the Relationships Between Extracurricular Activities, Social Support, and Bullying Behaviours in Irish Secondary Schools

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## Abstract

A study exploring the relationships between extracurricular activities, level of social support and bullying behaviours in a purposive sample of 134 second year students from boarding and non-boarding secondary schools. Cyberbullying and traditional bullying scales were used in the self-report questionnaire, along with a social support at school measure. The study suggests that extracurricular activity has no significant effect on bullying behaviours. However, it found that females are more likely to participate in cyberbullying than males and boarders are less likely to engage in bullying behaviours.

## Introduction

### Background

- **Bullying** is defined as "an aggressive act or behaviours carried out by a group or an individual repeatedly & over time against a victim who cannot easily defend himself" (Olweus, 1993).
- **Cyberbullying** is a relatively new phenomenon, using electronic means of contact.
- **Bullying behaviours** refers to traditional bullying perpetration & victimisation, as well as cyberbullying perpetration & victimisation.

### Research

- Negative effects of bullying affect both perpetrator and victim and include low self-esteem, school drop-out, poor future mental health, and relationship problems (Rigby et al., 1999)
- Males engage in more traditional forms vs. females (Smith, 2008)
- Those who participate in no extracurricular activities have a higher rate of engagement in bullying behaviours (Riese et al., 2015).

### Research cntd.

- Social Support has been negatively correlated to bullying behaviours (Bacchini et al., 2009).
- Social support blamed for bullying behaviours 21% of the time (Bacchini et al., 2009).
- Boarding school environment increases bullying behaviours (Mander et al., 2014).

### Research in Ireland

- Rates of bullying perp. & vic. 23% & 32% respectively (Minton & O'Moore, 2005) however, cyberbullying was not explored
- Cyberbullying perp. & vic. 9% & 14% in 2012 however, 2/3 of participants were male (O'Moore)

### Aim of Current Research

- To investigate the relationships between extracurricular activities & bullying, as well as social support.
- To investigate the Irish boarding school environment in terms of bullying behaviours
- To investigate the role of sex in cyberbullying behaviours

## Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1** – There will be a significant difference in the level of bullying behaviours between groups of extracurricular activity (sports, non-sports, sports + non-sports, none)
- Hypothesis 2** – The frequency of extracurricular activity and social support at school will have a negative association with bullying behaviours
- Hypothesis 3** – There will be a significant difference in level of cyberbullying involvement between males and females
- Hypothesis 4** – Frequency of bullying behaviour will differ significantly across the type of student (boarder, non-boarder)
- Research Question x2** – Why do you think students sometimes bully/get bullied by other students?

## Method

### Participants

- Purposive sample of 134, 2<sup>nd</sup> year students
- 3 Different Secondary Schools
- 79 Female, 59 Male, Mean age 13.73
- 30 Boarders, 83 Non-Boarders

### Extracurricular Activity Type

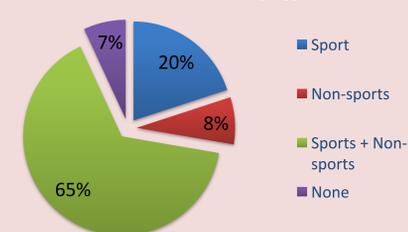


Fig. 1

### Design & Materials

- Mixed methods, cross-sectional, correlational study
- Traditional Bullying Questionnaire (Alsaker, 2003)
- Cyberbullying Questionnaire (Sticca et al., 2013)
- Level of Social Support at School Scale (Lester & Mander, 2015)

### Procedure

- Statutory declaration gained for working with a vulnerable group (u18s)
- Visited 2 schools to hand-out & collect physical questionnaires
- 1 hour class period, briefing, self-reporting and debrief
- 1 school's participants filled out an online survey

## Qualitative Findings

### Thematic Analysis

- Deductive analysis from a realist approach, to a semantic level was carried out
- Four main themes arose from the data, 3 of which had 2 sub-themes. A sample quote has been included from each.
- **Jealousy** – "might be a lot prettier than them", "jealous"
- **Background** – family background "something is happening at home eg. Parents separated", previous bullying "got bullied before and want someone else to know how it felt"
- **Social standing** – increase popularity "to be cool, to make people laugh", insecurities "because the bully is self-conscious about themselves"
- **Removal of responsibility** – unintentional "isn't really bullying, just messing", antagonising the bully "they provoke him or annoy him"



Jealousy  
7.62% coverage



Background  
5.32% coverage



Social Standing  
21.44% coverage



Removal of Responsibility  
5.32% coverage

## Quantitative Results

- H1**
  - 4 One-way, between groups, ANOVAs were run to test each bullying behaviour
  - No sig. difference found between any groups across all 4 behaviours, however fig. 1 demonstrates the uneven distribution of participants
- H2**
  - 4 Multiple Regressions were run to test if extracurricular activity frequency & level of social support significantly predicted bullying behaviours
  - Only traditional bullying victimisation was significantly correlated, explaining 10% of variance
  - Subsequent analysis showed only social support was significantly correlated ( $p = .001$ )
- H3**
  - A MANOVA found sig. difference in levels of cyberbullying between males & females, supporting the hypothesis ( $F(2, 120) = 5.08, p = .008, \text{effect size} = .08$ )
  - Further analysis, after Bonferroni adjustment, found no sig. difference in cyber perpetration but that females report higher levels of cyber vic. than males ( $F(1, 121) = 10.20, p = .002, \text{effect size} = .08$ )
- H4**
  - A MANOVA found a sig. difference between boarders & non-boarders; ( $F(4, 108) = 4.36, p = .003, \text{effect size} = .14$ )
  - A higher mean for 3 of 4 bullying behaviours in non-boarding school students, all but traditional perp.

## Discussion

### Conclusions

- As hypothesis 3 was supported this would suggest that cyberbullying levels haven't fallen, the sample of 2/3 male participants affected the O'Moore study (2012)
- Boarding school approached to tackling bullying should be looked at in order to reduce it's level in non-boarding schools. This contradicts such comparisons in Australia (Mander et al., 2014)
- The reaction of the bystander has an important role to play in encouraging/discouraging bullying behaviours

### Limitations

- Levene's test of normality was broken for extracurricular activity groups (fig. 2), an F-ratio from Welsh test of equality of means had to be used for statistical analysis
- Shapiro-Wilk's test for each scale not significant, meaning the skew of the 4 bullying and 1 social scale was not normal
- The number of boarders ( $n = 30$ ) vs non-boarders ( $n = 83$ )

## Future Implications

- Boarding school approaches to tackling bullying should be looked at, and possible implementation in other school examined in order to reduce bullying behaviours.
- Intervention techniques should incorporate differences for all-male and all-female school in order to focus on traditional or cyberbullying respectively
- To combat shapiro-wilk's test breaks, dichotomise by classifying participants who scored higher than one, or an adjusted figure, on at least one of the bullying items would be classified as either a cyberbully, cybervictim, traditional bully, or traditional victim respectively

**STOP BULLYING**  
STAND UP. SPEAK OUT.

Fig. 6

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## Images

- Fig. 1 – Created in Powerpoint for Mac with collected data
- Fig. 2 [http://www.fifteen21.com/wp-content/uploads/2013\\_02\\_a](http://www.fifteen21.com/wp-content/uploads/2013_02_a)
- Fig. 3 [http://writeyourautobiography.com/wp-content/uploads/2013\\_12\\_PHB1\\_high](http://writeyourautobiography.com/wp-content/uploads/2013_12_PHB1_high)
- Fig. 4 [http://bodyandbeing.lmc.gatech.edu/bab\\_wiki/images/thumb/7\\_7d\\_Social\\_status.jpg/180px-Social\\_status](http://bodyandbeing.lmc.gatech.edu/bab_wiki/images/thumb/7_7d_Social_status.jpg/180px-Social_status)
- Fig. 5 [http://micheleandco.com/wp-content/uploads/2017\\_02\\_accountability2.jpg](http://micheleandco.com/wp-content/uploads/2017_02_accountability2.jpg)
- Fig. 6 [http://www.keepingupwithtashannadai.com/wp-content/uploads/2016\\_07\\_bullying-logo-final-OUTLINED-300x244](http://www.keepingupwithtashannadai.com/wp-content/uploads/2016_07_bullying-logo-final-OUTLINED-300x244)

## If you need help, please speak to:

**Teenline**  
Online: [www.teenline.ie](http://www.teenline.ie)  
Email: [info@teenline.ie](mailto:info@teenline.ie)  
Phone: (01) 4622124  
Free Text: Teen to 50015  
**Sticks and Stones** online anti-bullying programme  
[www.sticksandstones.ie](http://www.sticksandstones.ie)