

Bullying, Body Esteem, and Body Dissatisfaction

Body Image Mental Health Children

Read the published, peer-reviewed paper here: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34333320/>

Citation

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General Summary

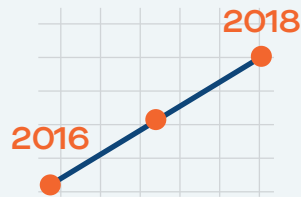
This research study investigates the intricate relationships among bullying victimization experiences, body esteem (BE), and body dissatisfaction (BD) in adolescents aged 10-16, with a specific focus on how obesity status moderates these connections. The study adopts a cross-sectional design, gathering data from U.S. adolescents through surveys, while also objectively measuring their weight and height.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to look at the relationships between bullying experiences, body esteem, and body dissatisfaction. We wanted to determine if these relationships differ for adolescents with obesity versus adolescents without obesity.

When did the study take place?

Adolescents were recruited between 2016-2018 from a metropolitan city in the southeastern US.



Why is this research important to patients, clinicians, and other researchers?

Unfortunately, being a victim of bullying is a common experience in adolescents. Bullying is persistent and aggressive behavior targeted at someone with the intention to cause harm. It can take on many forms such as physical contact, reputational damage, and online harm caused through the use of technology. Each type of bullying experience may result in different outcomes for different adolescents, particularly when looking at adolescents living with obesity.

“It is important for researchers to understand the connections between bullying and body esteem, particularly for children living with obesity.”

Who was involved?

A total of

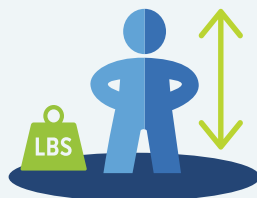


328
Adolescents

10-16
Years of Age
were involved in this study.

How did we get the results and findings?

Adolescents (10-16 years of age) from the US completed surveys. We also measured weight and height.





What was unique about this study? How were patients given a voice in research?

Strengths of this study was having a researcher collect the height and weight of participants. Also, we included a range of surveys that asked about different measures of body image, and different types of bullying. We also had a large proportion of adolescents with obesity (36%) in this study.



Were there any limitations to the study?

We collected all of the information from a wide variety of adolescents at one moment in time (cross-sectional design). This makes it hard to say for sure what is the cause and what is the effect. For example, does having overweight happen first and then being a victim of bullying happen after? Or does being bullied lead to weight gain? We will be able to find out more about this relationship if we could follow adolescents over time.



What were participants asked to do during the study?

For this study, parents reported the adolescents' birth date, sex, race/ethnicity, and household income. Adolescents completed questionnaires that collected information on the following topics: bullying victimization (how often in the past month have they experienced different types of bullying at school); body esteem (how often they agreed with statements related to their body); body dissatisfaction (indicate, using specific silhouettes, which images most reflect their own figure and ideal figure) and puberty status (self-reported stage of their pubertal development based on validated drawings). Research staff measured adolescent weight and height.



How will the results help children, parents, and people who care for them?

Based on the connections between bullying, weight status, and body image, it is important for anti-bullying campaigns to address how weight is often used to target victims. In other words, these results can help move society towards an acceptance of all body types. Also, our results may help with educating children, parents, and caregivers on potential warning signs of bullying victimization.

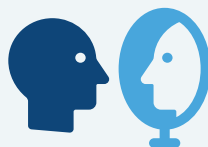


What did we learn?

Bullying experiences differed depending on whether the child was living with obesity or not. For adolescents with obesity, bullying experiences were related to lower body esteem. For adolescents without obesity, bullying experiences were not related to lower body esteem.

We also learned that there are different sub-types of bullying experiences that affect adolescents differently. For all kids, greater verbal-relational bullying experiences were associated with lower body esteem. Greater physical bullying experiences were related to higher body esteem but only for adolescents with obesity.

Our findings point out that it is important to consider their own weight status when talking about the connection between bullying and body image for adolescents.



What's next?

Future research may explore the situation of cyberbullying, which is bullying behavior that occurs outside of the physical school setting. For this study, we didn't specifically ask about experiences with bullying outside of school. That information could provide us with a more complete understanding of victimization and body esteem.

