

The Relationship Between Bullying and Substance Use Among Senior High School Students in Ghana, West-Africa



Marquinta Harvey M.S. and Andrew Owusu Ph.D.
Department of Health and Human Performance

INTRODUCTION

School based bullying is a global problem associated with a myriad of detrimental physical and psychological effects. Recent evidence indicates a link between bully behavior and likelihood of substance abuse. Interestingly research suggests bully victims are actually less likely to use illicit drugs, while bully perpetrators have higher rates of substance abuse.²

There is evidence to suggest bully prevention interventions are linked to lowered reports of substance abuse. More research is needed to validate this hypothesis and would be extremely valuable to schools in particular so educators could potentially use a single intervention to help reduce two potentially destructive behaviors relatively common in adolescents.³

Purpose of Study: This study examines the relationship between bullying perpetration and substance use among senior high school students in Ghana, West Africa.

METHODS

Data from the 2012 Ghana Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) were utilized. A total of 1,984 students participated in the 2012 GSHS. Complex sample frequencies and logistic regression analysis were utilized to calculate prevalence estimates and odds ratios respectively, focusing on bullying and substance use.



RESULTS

Overall, 23.4% of students reported bullying other students in the 30 days preceding survey. Among bullies, 9.8% smoke, 20.5% use alcohol, 16.1% had ever binge drunk and, 10.4% had used marijuana one of more times in lifetime. Students who smoke (OR 6.4; CI 3.4-12.2), use alcohol (OR 2.3; CI 1.5-3.2), binge drink (OR 1.8; CI 1.2-2.5), or ever used marijuana (OR 6.6; CI 2.9-14.9) were significantly more likely to report being involved in bullying other students compared to those who did not use aforementioned substances.

Descriptive Statistics

Variable Labels	Bully (%)	Non-Bully (%)
Current Smoker	9.8 (7.4-12.8)	1.7 (28.1-47.1)
Current Alcohol Use	20.5 (16.8-24.9)	10.4 (7.3-14.5)
Ever Binge Drank	16.1 (12.4-20.7)	9.5 (7.2-12.3)
Ever Used Marijuana	10.4 (6.5-16.4)	1.6 (1.0-2.5)

Substance Use by Bullying Perpetration

	Odds Ratio	95% CI
Current Smoker		
Bully	6.4	3.4-12.2
Non-Bully	1	
Current Alcohol Use		
Bully	2.3	1.5-3.2
Non-Bully	1	
Ever Binge Drank		
Bully	1.8	1.2-2.5
Non-Bully	1	
Ever Used Marijuana		
Bully	6.6	2.9-14.9
Non-Bully	1	

CONCLUSIONS

Our current study provides insight as well as supports existing research suggesting a significant relationship between bullying and substance abuse. It is important to note, bully perpetrators and not bully victims are shown to be more susceptible to substance abuse behavior. Also males are more likely become victims to both bullying and substance abuse. A limited number of studies have shown bullying interventions to be associated with positive changes in substance abuse, such as lowered amounts of binge drinking and marijuana use.¹ The significant association between bullying and substance use suggests the need to consider addressing substance use as part of bullying intervention efforts among senior high school students in Ghana.

AUTHORS AFFILIATION & FUNDING SOURCES

Middle Tennessee State University

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