BOLSTERING RESILIENCE TO POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT FOR COMBATING BULLYING

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Abstract
Bullying as a phenomenon poses a great threat towards physical as well as mental health of an individual. These work as speed breakers for the holistic and overall positive development. Psychologically speaking, bullying leads to serious consequences such as having a low sense of well-being, being poorly socially adjusted, psychological distress further leading to physical illnesses. As a psychologist, our approach has always been solution based. Therefore, with the increase in research on bullying as a social issue, there has been a parallel increase in research on themes which shall provide relief from this menace. Resilience is one of the core components that empower individuals of all age groups to safeguard themselves from any physical and/or mental concern caused by bullying. Positive psychology primarily aims at bringing out the best in an individual. It assists them to live their life to its peak capacity in all domains of development. Under the umbrella of positive psychology, this research paper attempts to identify reasons and ways of bolstering resilience in such a manner that individuals feel confident and can fight against bullying with their own skill sets.

Keywords: Resilience for positive development, Bullying, Psychological health

INTRODUCTION
Bullying, in today's day and age is one of the top social issues which needs immediate attention in all spheres and across all age groups. Bullying still does not have one definition that is available. Nonetheless, various researchers at different points in time have made several attempts at encompassing this phenomenon in sentences. Olweus is considered a pioneer researcher in the field of bullying. He was one of the first researchers who made an attempt to define the construct of bullying and victimization. In 1994, Olweus defined bullying in the academic context, saying that bullying as a phenomenon occurs when one student is exposed, repeatedly over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students. (p. 1173). In this definition, a negative action is an instance where one individual makes an intentional attempt to hurt, harm, discomfort another individual via varied means. This negative action can either be physical (hurting, slapping, kicking, etc.) or verbal (using hurtful and abusive language, calling out names, etc.) or through facial expressions and doing unacceptable obscene gestures or one individual intentionally spreading false rumours about another individual with the motive of social exclusion and defamation. Most of the researchers have taken this understanding of bullying as a foundation to further build up their understanding of bullying Borg, 1999; Dake et al., 2003; Glover, Gough, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000; Kristensen & Smith, 2003; Mynard & Joseph, 2000; Rigby, Cox, & Black, 1997).

Research on resilience has been surrounded by complexities especially around its definition. The operational definition of resilience changes from study to study, context to context and even target audience and across the realm of time (Heller, Larrieu, D'Imperio, & Boris, 1999; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Over the years, the research on resilience has evolved. Earlier resilience was simply thought of as absence of psychopathology. It changed to an individual having lack of psychological problems along with having emotional, social and psychological well-being (Kinard, 1998). Most definitions of resilience have basic core components. They try to incorporate the understanding and

notion of being normal especially after a traumatic or adverse experience. All these definitions are surely culturally contextual and deeply embedded in the culturally appropriateness.

Possible Causes of Bullying
Bullying as a whole concept occurs in the form of a complex social interaction which involves victims, bullies, bystanders, educators, parents, peers, etc. (De Bourdeauhuij et al.,2001). It is unfortunate that most of the research studies on bullying are generally correlational in nature. This implies that specific causes of bullying are difficult to outline. Nonetheless, there are a few factors which may cause bullying.

Personality
In 1973, Olweus came to a conclusion that majority of victims show anxiety and insecurity when compared to other regular students. They are said to be quieter than usual, overtly sensitive, and very cautious of themselves. Along with this, typical characteristics such as low self- esteem, and having a negative sense of self- image were prominent. On the flip side, it is often assumed by psychologists that bullies are consistently anxious and insecure as individuals. However, there is not enough research evidence to support this viewpoint. Empathy levels are yet another core feature which helps to understand interesting patterns. In an Australian research, it was found that the scores on tests of empathy obtained by bullies heavily depended on the fact if those bullies had ever been victims of bullying themselves. It was observed that the bullies who had at any point been victims of bullying displayed lowest levels on empathy. The bullies who hadn't been victims of bullying themselves displayed high scores on empathy (Wade & Reece, 2004).

This, at first, seems to be like an counterintuitive finding because theoretically speaking, one would expect the individuals involved in bullying without being a victim themselves to have lowest levels on empathy and the individuals who were just victims of bullying would show high levels of empathy. Sutton and colleagues (1999) proposed that individuals who are never

involved into bullying or similar situations are unable to empathize with other counterparts in terms of how the latter are suffering. Also, on the other hand, they believed that bullies, by nature, are more than capable of perspective taking. The bullies, according to these researchers, understand the mental state of their victims. This, however, does not account for being empathetic individuals (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2001; Sutton, Smith, & Sweetenham, 1999; Warden & MacKinnon, 2003).

School Environment
Some of the common beliefs regarding instances of bullying and school environment can be the class size i.e. chances of bullying are higher with a bigger class size, bullying is a consequence of cut throat competition among students, and bullying is an outcome of venting out frustration and anger related to failure. However, there is no concrete evidence backing up such assumptions. Ananiadou (2003) found that the school environment or the general climate of the school did affect the prevalence of bullying in schools, irrespective of the anti-bullying policy being in place.

Family Environment
Research studies indicate that individuals coming from dysfunctional families are often involved as bullies. This is so because of their lack of understanding of emotions such as love, respect, acceptance, being supportive, belongingness, etc. In such family situations, generally parents are mostly critical of their children and what they do (Rigby, 2002). Due to such experiences, prospective bullies develop hostility towards their general environment, leading to emotions and impulses making them derive satiety from hurting or inflicting pain upon others. On the other hand, the victims are said to be from homes which have an extreme level of demandingness which is intrusive in nature. Mostly, in such households, there is limited or absolutely no freedom given to children in order to take their decisions or to use opportunities at hand for growth and development. For most things, they do as they are being told to do. The control over these individuals is immense (Ladd & Ladd, 2002). Besides these components, it was also found that parental education; socio economic status, family composition i.e. nuclear/ joint family had no impact on the incidence of bullying or victimization (Sourander, Helstela, Helenius, and Piha, 2000).

Physical Appearance
It is often believed that external appearance did make a difference if an individual was victimized or not. There is not enough research evidence to support it. As early as 1978, it was hypothesized that any individual who was over-weight or had a specific type of hair style, wore spectacles or spoke a non-generic language were predicted to be prospective victims of bullying (Olweus, 1978). Later, there is empirical evidence showing that individuals who are physically different from the regular ones, such as having a disability, or being over-weight have much more chances of being victimized (Smith & Ananiadou, 2004).

DEVELOPMENT OF RESILIENCE: INDIVIDUAL
Resilience is a buildable skill-set. Numerous research studies have associated certain individual characteristics which are present in resilient people. These include having a very high sense of self- esteem, high order social skills, optimistic thinking patterns, strong coping mechanism, and having above average levels of emotional intelligence.

Self-Esteem
Self- esteem can be defined as perception of self, subjective in nature and not an accurate representation of self, done objectively (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003). Lee, 2000 conducted a study and concluded that people with high level of self-esteem are more likely to use self- protective and effective coping strategies for problem solving in order to deal with a crises or any problematic experience, as compared to people with low sense of self- esteem.

Social Skills
Social skills are like an umbrella term which has a lot of other characteristics. Terms such as interpersonal skills, interpersonal competence levels, communication skills, and social competence are often used interchangeably with social skills. Segrin, 2013 has defined social skills as the ability of an individual to interact effectively and appropriately with other people. Set of well-honed social skills are directly proportional to good level of resiliency in individuals. Werner, 2011 found that resilient children i.e. children displaying high levels of resilience have social skills as the core feature to cope with difficult situations. Studies which have examined the relationship between resilience and social skills have also found out that a dip in resilience and social skills also lead to a decrease in well-being.

Optimism
Optimism can be simply put across as the outlook of a person towards positive outcomes. Dispositional optimism is the tendency of an individual to expect positive things to take place in spite of being faced with challenges (Scheier & Carver, 2003). Individuals who are generally optimistic tend to believe that negative situations occur due to unstoppable factors which are beyond one's control. This feature differentiates them from pessimists since the latter believe that anything bad happening is due to their own fault and it is internal instead of external. Being optimistic works as an assistant to take failures in one's positive stride and take it as a challenge to overcome (Steinberg and Gano-Overway, 2003). Walsh, 2003 found that optimism has positive effects on development of coping mechanism, levels of resilience, recovering after a traumatic episode, and overall overcoming the issues and obstacles in life.

Coping
There have been several arguments that developing coping strategies help in development of resilience, especially in young individuals. Sharpening coping mechanisms is most often the desired goal when any intervention plan is developed (Cunningham, 2002). Effective coping strategies act as a cushion, protecting an individual against depression (Frydenberg, 2004). Kochenderfer-Ladd and Skinner, 2002 examined the relationship between coping and resilience. They looked at peer victimization and found that any individual who had an ineffective or inadequate coping mechanism were less resilient and therefore, more prone to being victimized by peers. This further led to maladjustment and more negative consequences.

Emotional Intelligence
Emotional intelligence is also known as social intelligence. It primarily aids an individual to understand and differentiate between one's own and the other person's emotions and feelings. An emotionally intelligent person makes efficient and appropriate choices in life (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997; Mayer & Salovey, 1993). The impact on emotional intelligence on resilience can be understood with the help of the study by Palmer, Donaldson, and Stough in 2012. They looked at emotional intelligence and life satisfaction levels across 107 participants in the age group 16-64 years. The results indicated a direct relation between emotional intelligence, life satisfaction and development of resilience. Hunt and Evans in 2004 investigated the connection between emotional intelligence and the ways in which different people responded to traumatic experiences in their lives. The sample consisted of 414 individuals with the mean age of 36 years. It was found that the participants who had a higher level of emotional intelligence reported facing fewer instances of trauma. This can be because of the fact that emotional intelligent individuals are better equipped at dealing with any negative experiences in their lives and are less distressed than the people with lower emotional intelligence.

DEVELOPMENT OF RESILIENCE: FAMILY

Family is one unit where an individual spends the largest proportion of one's life. Especially in the Indian context, family plays a crucial role in imparting and enhancing various skills, including empathy and resilience. Rutter in 2001 also emphasized on the fact that family has a great influence on the behaviour and its patterns of children. Parenting styles and the depth of bond shared between the parent and the child can be said to be the two prime factors which impact resilience. They are discussed as follows.

Parenting Styles

There are four basic parenting styles, namely, authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful. Authoritative parents set boundaries for their children which acts as a safety net for their holistic development. They do leave some space for the children's voices and are flexible in nature. The expectations are realistic in nature and they are responsive to their children's needs and desires. Authoritarian parenting style comprises of the expectation of the parent to be obeyed at all costs and in all situations. Almost no attention is given to the child's viewpoint. Permissive parents are responsive, similar to authoritative parents, but do not set any boundaries for their children. Neglectful parents have low involvement with their children and hardly respond to their children's needs (Brenner & Fox, 2009). Prevatt (2003) looked at role of parenting practices in development of children's emotional functioning and resilience. The aim of this study was to design a model of resiliency. It was found that positive parenting i.e. parents being cohesive as a unit, familial support, family values being embedded in moral conduct and having a religious orientation were all the key factors in deciding how well does a child function emotionally. This led to a resilient child. Similarly, Ungar in 2004 studied the level of supervision by parents and general well-being. It was found that children whose parents gave them guidance and the freedom to make their decisions adopted familial mature roles more easily as compared to their counterparts. This helps the children develop a greater sense of independence and aids development of resilience.

Relationship with Parents

Parents are said to be the first teachers of a child. They have an indispensible role in shaping their lives. This also decides whether these children will deal with a negative situation effectively or in distress (Perry, 2002; Ungar, 2004). There is enough evidence to support that all children are born with a specific temperament and this dictates their level and degree of emotional reactivity, also their perception towards fear, etc. Usually, there are three categories of temperaments, viz, difficult, slow to warm up, and easy (Rothbart, 1986). This is a biological fact. However, Perry 2002 argues that the impact of one's bond with their parents acts as a major factor in deciding how well that child shall be able to deal with stressful situations. Children, in most cases, mirror their parents. There are chances that a child with a calm parent shall mirror being calm and vice- versa. The interaction between a parent and a child should be more horizontal in nature rather than typically hierarchical. This makes space for active interaction between parents and children with open channels of communication (Russell, Pettit, & Mize, 2013). It's not just the quantity, but rather the quality of the interactions between a parent and child (Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2011).

DEVELOPMENT OF RESILIENCE: SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

As humans being social animals, the impact of society and immediate environment is undeniable. Looking at the research studies on role of social environment in shaping resilient individuals, two key features have come about. These are having a sense of belonging or connectedness and the quality of social support received to be able to cope with any bad experience. These can be said to be as protective factors against any situations which puts you at risk (Rew & Horner, 2003).

Primarily, social support and a sense of being connected, for an individual can be obtained via three possible sources, namely, family, friends/ peers, and school. These act as buffers against any adverse situations. Reid in 2013 conducted a study on over 30,000 secondary school students. This sample was surveyed on about their risk as well as protective factors. It was found that connectedness to one's family emerged as a major protective factor, in both male and female participants. Blum et al, (2015), found that connectedness to one's school helped the participants to retain rather than drop out and also internalize it as being a protective factor against any external negative behaviour. This helped to reduce any form of emotional distress and thus, involvement in hurtful behaviour.

RESILIENCE BASED INTERVENTIONS

Intervention, by definition, can be understood as any action of intervening with an aim to make a positive change. As the name suggests, it is done consciously, in complete awareness with the objective to improve a given situation. To deal with bullying, many schools and other educational institutions have designed and adopted anti-bullying intervention programmes. Even though most of them claim to be highly successful, it is important that we, as psychologists aid those programmes with more positive and powerful tools. Therefore, skill based interventions such as based on empathy, positive development, resilience, social skills, etc. prove to be extremely helpful. The knowledge base on resilience is expanding continuously and one needs to keep up with the changing social and cultural contexts. In order to design an efficient and effective resilience based intervention, it is essential to have a thorough understanding about the correlates of resilience. These should, ideally, work on enhancing the resources much more than just to minimize the risks.

Cowen, Wyman, Work and Iker (2010) developed and later, also evaluated a pilot study on a resilience intervention plan which was school- based. The core aim of this programme was to enhance the sample's knowledge about emotions and feelings, develop skills for perspective-taking, learn problem solving methods, especially for social situations, and further build their self- esteem. On comparing the pre and post intervention data, it was found that the participants had significantly improved on all the target areas. These results were based on self and teacher reports.

Lynch, Geller and Schmidt (2016) implemented and evaluated a resilience based programme for children. There were four key components on this programme. One, looking at the social competence levels; two, the problem solving attributes; three, how autonomous were the participants; and four, having a sense of belief in self and purpose. This was implemented by trained teachers over 23 weeks. The classes were conducted twice a week. This yielded out effective results. The overall social- emotional competence of the participants was significantly enhanced and positive coping mechanism was developed. Possibilities of involvement in anti-social or violent/ aggressive behaviour was reduced visibly.
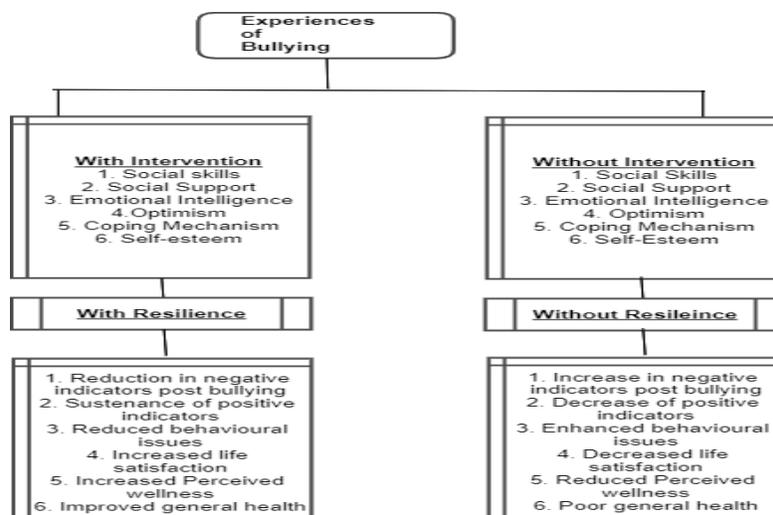
Figure 1- At a glance comparison of individuals with bullying experiences with and without resilience based intervention

CONCLUSION

Using an eclectic approach with a genuine attempt to draw from the available academic literature, Bullying, in a nutshell can be said to be an imbalance of power. It leads to an asymmetrical relationship in terms of power. The victim is constantly exposed to various negative actions and thus has difficulty in either taking a stand or to simply defend them. This implies that whenever the division of power is equal on various measures such as physical strength, mental capabilities, emotional stability, etc; the chances of bullying taking place is minimalized to a large extent (Dake et al., 2003).

This paper gives you a deep insight into how development and sharpening of resilience can give the victims of bullying, the power to avoid and tackle any negative effects of bullying on them. This gives them a head start to continue to thrive in spite of any experiences of bullying. Biologically speaking, resilience is embedded in three core areas, namely, self- confidence; self-esteem; and having a positive self- concept. These three key constructs have their roots in somatic nervous system; autonomic nervous system; and central nervous system respectively. There is also some limited research stating that resilience can be said to be epigenetic in nature i.e. it can be inherited. However, there is not enough research to support this argument. Psychologically, there are various tenets of the resilience model, namely, having a high sense of self- esteem; having a non-judgmental mind; being mindful; having emotion regulation; imbibing positive coping strategies; being flexible; having spiritual freedom and having strong relationships. These areas have been deconstructed looking at the vast literature available in this field. Childhood and adolescence hold utmost importance in an individual's life. Therefore, bullying at school is a constant struggle to deal with. Empowering the individuals with resilience against victimization acts as a cushion and is a step forward in the field of positive psychology.

The American Psychological Association has outlined ten core ways to develop resilience for positive development. First, maintaining good and warm relationships with family members and friends. Second, attempt at avoiding looking at any stressful situation as something which is unbearable and the end of the world. Third, accepting situations and circumstances which are beyond one's control. Fourth, the goals which are set must be realistic and achievable. Fifth, in case of any adverse condition, the actions taken must be decisive in nature rather than vague.

Sixth, in case an individual has experienced loss, s/he must search for opportunities promoting self- discovery in newer ways. Seventh, find ways to develop and enhance self-confidence. Eighth, looking at the broader picture rather than stressing over one stressful event. This helps one develop a long term perspective. Ninth, staying generally positive by try and not losing hope and visualizing the wishes and desires. Tenth, mind and body are both equally essential to be taken care of (APA, 2014).

Since no two individuals react or respond to the same negative situation in an identical manner, programmes based on these findings can be designed and implemented at the school level and also at the community level, especially keeping the above points in mind. The efficacy of these programmes can be measured by analyzing a pre and post situation in the given context. These programmes can be based on different age groups, varied abilities and also as per context of the target audience. Looking at the devastating effects which such negative episodes of bullying have on children and adolescents, it can be said that the need to counter this issue is global in nature. These interventions can help along with any other cognitive behavioural programmes to make a difference in the society, as a whole.

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