

Bullying among New Zealand youth



RESEARCH

‘Incidence of Bullying and Victimisation among Adolescents in New Zealand’

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Background

Bullying is an international phenomenon, although rates of bullying differ across countries, gender groups, and ethnic groups.

There are many different types of bullying such as traditional bullying inside and outside the school and bullying via text message or the internet.

Some research indicates that New Zealand has some of the highest rates of bullying in the developed world.

New Zealand has a unique multicultural society, which makes it interesting to compare to other countries on rates of bullying, especially in regards to how it varies between ethnic groups.

The Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research, part of Victoria University of Wellington, undertook a study to look at the prevalence and types of bullying and victimisation of bullying in New Zealand adolescents (aged 10-14) and how this was affected by age, gender, and ethnicity.

Main research findings

Students were more than twice as likely to engage in bullying than averages reported in other international studies. Being a victim of bullying also appears to be higher relative to the international data.

Bullying by text message was the most popular means, followed by traditional bullying inside the school. Being a victim of bullying occurred most often in school, followed by texting.

Overall, traditional bullying was more common in males than females, while being a victim of bullying was most common in school for males. Rates of bullying via texting or the internet was not found to differ between males and females.

Overall, there were no differences between bullying and being a victim of bullying based on ethnicity. However, when examining the different types of bullying, Māori individuals reported being a bully inside school, outside school, and through texting more than the other ethnic groups.

In terms of being a victim of bullying, Māori youth reported texting, as the greatest source of bullying compared to the other ethnic groups.

Relevance of findings to New Zealand

High rates of bullying and victimisation compared to the international averages should be of concern and draw attention to the need for intervention programmes or policies in the educational system, which address all forms of bullying.

Although bullying appears to be a problem for all, Māori youth are using specific types of bullying more often than other groups as well as being a victim of text-based bullying more often than other groups.

As a bi-cultural and multicultural nation with higher than average levels of endorsement of diversity among New Zealanders, the observed differences between ethnic groups must exist for some other reason, such as a perceived discrepancy in privilege between different ethnic groups. Intervention programmes may need to be adapted to cater specifically to the needs of Māori students such that this problematic behaviour can be stopped.