



The Impact of Adult Bullying on Children Becoming Bullies

Investigating associations between adult-to-child bullying in family and school contexts and children’s involvement in peer and cyberbullying, addressing gaps in prevention research



NAME

Luca Janka László

AFFILIATION

Parents International

BIO:

Social scientist; NGO experience; parental engagement specialist

RESEARCH SUMMARY

This research examines associations between bullying by adults in children’s homes and schools and their involvement in peer and cyberbullying. It asks how these relationships manifest and why recognizing adult roles is essential for more effective prevention strategies.

ONE KEY FINDING

75.5%

Across categories, many students report experiencing bullying at least once, a notable share report frequent exposure, and many also witness it, across peer, teacher, and family contexts.

of participants report teacher bullying and 31.8% family bullying, highlighting widespread bullying by adults substantial exposure beyond peer contexts.

WHY IT MATTERS

Bullying is often seen as a peer issue, but these findings show that adults are also part of the problem. Recognising this can improve prevention, strengthen accountability, and ensure children receive safer, more supportive environments.

KEY CONCLUSION

Bullying should be understood as a multi-context issue, not just a peer problem: experiences involving teachers and family members are common and closely linked to students’ own bullying behaviours.

Inside the Research

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This study examined peer, teacher, and family bullying among 11–14-year-old students in Hungary, aiming to assess prevalence across contexts and explore how these experiences relate to peer bullying behaviours.

STUDY AT A GLANCE

country: Hungary

participants: 371 students from 15 public schools

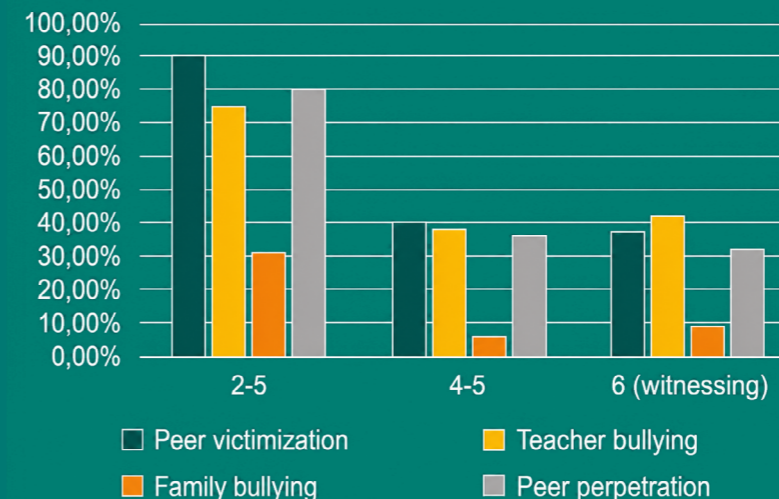
age group: ages 11–14, lower secondary and upper primary

method: Cross-sectional survey using structured questionnaire

focus: Peer, teacher, and family bullying and their associations

Key number / statistic / result

Bullying Prevalence



FINDING 1

students who experience bullying by adults are more likely to also bully their peers.

FINDING 2

seeking help alone does not reduce bullying; how helpful the support feels matters more.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Bullying is not limited to peer interactions but occurs across relationships with teachers and family members. Understanding these wider contexts highlights the need to address adult behaviour and improve support systems to create safer, more effective prevention environments.



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