


Student Bullying in Higher Education: The Story So Far...



Bullying: a systematic abuse of power whereby intentionally aggressive behaviour is repeated against victims who are unable to defend themselves (Smith, 2004).

Aims
 The aim of this research is to explore bullying amongst students within UK Higher Education. Most bullying research is conducted in schools and workplaces, therefore, it is essential to fill the research gap and uncover the extent of student bullying at university. Students need to be sufficiently prepared for society on graduating, and should not have to deal with the psychological effects of being bullied.

Method
 The first step in this investigation was to explore students' thoughts and attitudes using focus group methodology. Five focus groups were conducted online, and questions included: **How would you define bullying? How much of a problem do you think cyberbullying is amongst students? Where do you think bullying happens around the university? Who is involved in the bullying situations? What do you think are the negative effects of being bullied at university?** See below for findings.
 Building on the focus group findings and a review of existing scales used for children and adults, a new questionnaire scale was created to measure the frequency and types of bullying in Higher Education. The scale consisted of 48 items (pull tab for some examples), forming part of the first pilot questionnaire, which was distributed online through Qualtrics. Psychometric tests were conducted on Pilot One, which revealed the inadequacy of certain items (i.e. nobody experienced the behaviour at all, and therefore these were removed before administering the questionnaire to a different sample for Pilot Two. The new scale had 28 items. See below for findings.

- to your face
- in my face
- appearance
- threatened
- work
- to spread
- cliques
- others' work
- snirt you
- and
- controlled
- meeting
- or
- Been physically attacked
- Experienced cruel looks
- Had studies sabotaged
- Been prevented from using facilities
- Had possessions stolen
- Experienced inappropriate sexual advances
- Had food thrown away or eaten
- Been stalked or followed
- Had images shared or blackmailed
- Excluded from chat and games
- Experienced gossip and rumours online
- Experienced indirect online abuse
- Been bombarded with messages
- Been directly insulted
- Been threatened in public online
- Been blocked or unfriended purposely

Focus Groups ✓

So what did students think?



Bullying at university no longer looks like this...



Pilot Surveys ✓

Descriptive Statistics

	Participants	Min. Score	Max. Score	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Pilot One Score	241	47	195	64	24
Pilot Two Score	304	29	111	37	13

For both samples - Pilot One and Pilot Two - bullying scores were relatively low, indicating that the samples surveyed did not experience much bullying.

The most commonly experienced behaviours...

Pilot One:

1. Experiencing negative clique groups
2. Being excluded from group work or social outings
3. Having opinions belittled
4. Experiencing cruel looks
5. Being the target of nasty jokes

Pilot Two:

1. Experiencing negative clique groups
2. Being the target of nasty jokes
3. Being shouted at
4. Being threatened or intimidated
5. Being made fun of

Main Study

Summary and Next Steps

The two small samples surveyed so far report very little bullying experienced at university. The newly created 'Bullying at University Scale' will next be included in a larger questionnaire, which also seeks to measure other factors of the 'student' experience. The online questionnaire will be distributed to as many UK universities as possible in order to gain a larger sample; this will help us achieve a more representative prevalence rate of student bullying and associated effects.

