

Kids who bully have troubles with parents, friends



CTV.ca News Staff

Updated: Tue. Mar. 25 2008 4:47 PM ET

A Canadian study has found that children who bully other kids have trouble with relationships with their parents and friends.

Researchers followed just under 900 schoolchildren from ages 10 to 18. Among other questions, they asked the kids to report on how much they bully other kids and the nature of their relationships with parents and friends.

Almost 10 per cent of the children reported that they had bullied other kids at a consistently high rate throughout their elementary and high school years. Also:

- just more than 13 per cent bullied kids in elementary school but had stopped by the end of high school.
- just more than 35 per cent said they participated in moderate levels of bullying throughout school.
- just more than 40 per cent stated that they had never bullied anyone throughout school.

The study found that kids who reported that they engaged in bullying behavior tended to be aggressive and had a weak moral compass, and they had problems in their relationships with parents and friends. They also spent a lot of time with others who engaged in similar behavior.

Lead researcher Debra Pepler, professor of psychology at York University in Toronto and senior associate researcher at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children, said that by identifying these patterns of behavior in kids, it will be easier to design and implement bullying prevention strategies.

"Bullying is a relationship problem that requires relationship solutions by focusing on the bullying children's strained relationships with parents and risky relationships with peers," said Pepler.

"By providing intensive and ongoing support starting in the elementary school years to this small group of youth who persistently bully, it may be possible to promote healthy relationships and prevent their 'career path' of bullying that leads to numerous social-emotional and relationship problems in adolescence and adulthood."

The study, to be published in the March/April issue of the journal *Child Development*, was conducted by researchers at York University in Toronto and Queens University in Kingston.

Abstract

Trajectories in bullying through adolescence were studied along with individual, family, and peer relationship factors. At the outset, participants' ages ranged from 10 to 14; 74% identified as European Canadian with the remainder from diverse backgrounds. With 8 waves of data over 7 years, 871 students (466 girls and 405 boys) were studied to reveal 4 trajectories: 9.9% reported consistently high levels of bullying, 13.4% reported early moderate levels desisting to almost no bullying at the end of high school, 35.1% reported consistently moderate levels, and 41.6% almost never reported bullying. Students who bullied had elevated risks in individual, parent, and peer relationship domains. Risk profiles and trajectories provide direction for interventions to curtail the development of power and aggression in relationships.