

Bullying victimisation and children's subjective well-being: A comparative study in seven Asian countries

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Abstract

There is a lack of studies on bullying in non-Western low-income and middle-income countries examining the relationship between bullying and subjective well-being (SWB). The aims of this study are twofold. The first goal is to investigate the relationship between children's experiences of being bullied (physically, verbally, and emotionally) and their SWB in seven low-industrialised Asian countries. The second aim is to ascertain how the relation between bullying and SWB differs across these countries. This study used data from the third wave of the Children's Worlds survey across two age groups (10- and 12-year-olds) within seven Asian countries (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam). The sample consists of 22,150 children, based on representative sampling in each country (48.8% boys and 51.2% girls; Mean age = 10.90). School bullying victimisation was measured by self-reported frequency of experiencing being bullied by other children at school. SWB was measured using the 5-item version of the Children's Worlds Subjective Well-Being Scale (CW-SWBS5). Data were analysed using structural equation modelling (SEM) and multigroup SEM in order to check for metric and scalar invariance among countries. The results show an excellent fit for the models using the pooled sample for 10- and 12-year-olds. The multigroup models also displayed an excellent fit and found a significant negative contribution of bullying to SWB of children in all seven countries, depending on the type of bullying incidents (except for being left out by other children in the 10-year-old group in Nepal, which had a significant positive contribution). Bullying incidents across the seven Asian countries involved in this study are quite high, with a prevalence between 8.6% to 24% for being bullied two or three times and more than three times. Being called unkind names was the most frequent bullying incident, more frequently

among boys and 12-year-olds than among girls and 10-year-olds. Being left out by other children made the strongest contribution to SWB of children in the studied Asian countries, except for India (both age groups), Nepal (10-year-old group), and Sri Lanka (12-year-old group). Even though bullying negatively contributed to SWB, relatively high scores were observed for SWB in six countries according to Cummins' theory of homeostasis (except Vietnam that displayed SWB mean scores below the expected set-point ranging from 60-90). The results were explained using Cummins' SWB homeostasis theory, suggesting that children adapted to the negative situation of being bullied to protect their SWB.

Keywords: Asian countries, bullying, children, subjective well-being, school