

Childhood bullying: More than just a temporary nuisance

By ACSH Staff — April 29, 2015



Bullying is a common topic in the news these days. While in the past it

consisted mainly of physical abuse, the problem has been magnified many times over by the explosion of social media.

It is not uncommon to hear of instances where persistent bullying has driven children and adolescents to react in unspeakable ways, for example, violence against students at the victim's school, or suicide.

A deeply disturbing 2012 [documentary](#) ^[1] examined specific cases where bullying impacted young people and their families in terrible ways.

Now there is a study that examines and quantifies the effects of bullying on the victims. Those affected do not return to normal lives once the bullying stops. It is quite the opposite the impact on bullied victims may be permanent.

The [study](#) ^[2], entitled *Adult mental health consequences of peer bullying and maltreatment in childhood: two cohorts in two countries*, was published online in *The Lancet Psychiatry* (April 28, 2015), and the results are quite disturbing.

The study was led by Dieter Wolke, Professor of Psychology at the University of Warwick. It is further discussed by Alvin Barnes in a [piece](#) ^[3] that was written on the *Wall Street OTC* website. Upon even a cursory glance, it becomes clear that victims of childhood bullying fare poorly, even much later on.

Dr. Wolke writes, Bullying is characterised by repetitive aggressive behaviour engaged in by an individual or peer group with more power than the victim.

Barnes adds, that bullying also represents [T]he continuous abusive behavior conducted by peers at least once a week, that consists of social exclusion firstly and that manifests itself by repeated actions ranging from name-calling to physical and even sexual abuse.

Dr. Wolke's study compared more than 4,000 students in the UK and 1,420 in the US. The

children in the US were all taking part in the [Great Smoky Mountains Study](#) ^[4] a collaborative effort conducted by researchers at Duke and the University of North Carolina that included children in western North Carolina as well as the nearby Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation. In Great Britain, children who had been bullied at ages 8, 10 and 13 were interviewed.

Children in both groups were more likely to experience mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety and suicidal tendencies more than 10 years later. As adults they also had more trouble integrating into society as well as holding a job.

Dr. Wolke said, Being bullied is not a harmless rite of passage or an inevitable part of growing up; it has serious long-term consequences.

And Mr. Barnes adds, Therefore, the fact that bullying can cause permanent mental damage should become common knowledge, so that people stop treating it like a joke and become aware of its true long-term consequences.

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[1] <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1682181/>

[2] [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(15\)00165-0/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(15)00165-0/abstract)

[3] <http://www.wallstreetotc.com/bullying-can-cause-permanent-mental-damage/217737/>

[4] <https://devepi.duhs.duke.edu/gsms.html>