

**COGNITIVE AND EMOTIONAL PREDICTORS OF BULLYING
BEHAVIOR IN PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN**

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between cognitive development, emotional intelligence, and the occurrence of bullying in primary school children. Based on research conducted in four public schools involving 106 children aged 7 to 11, the study examines how self-awareness, empathy, impulse control, and problem-solving skills influence bullying behavior. The results indicate that children with low emotional intelligence and weak executive function are more likely to display aggressive tendencies or become frequent victims. The findings underscore the importance of enhancing emotional literacy and cognitive flexibility to mitigate bullying.

Keywords: bullying, cognitive development, emotional intelligence, problem-solving, child psychology, primary education

Introduction

Bullying in early school years is not merely a result of poor behavior or peer conflict—it often reflects deeper cognitive and emotional struggles. Children with underdeveloped emotional intelligence or limited problem-solving skills may resort to aggression or submission when dealing with social challenges. This study examines how variations in cognitive function, emotional awareness, and self-regulation correlate with different bullying roles. A better understanding of these internal predictors can support more targeted and effective intervention strategies in schools.

Analysis

The research was conducted across four primary schools in Bukhara and Samarkand regions. The sample included 106 children aged 7 to 11. Three core assessment tools were used:

1. The Mayer-Salovey Emotional Intelligence Test for Children (EITC)
2. A simplified version of the WISC cognitive scale
3. A peer-nomination bullying inventory and teacher behavior checklist

Results showed:

- Children with low emotional awareness and weak impulse control scored high on the bullying aggressor scale.
- Children with below-average cognitive problem-solving skills were more often passive victims.
- Those with high emotional intelligence and working memory capacity were least likely to be involved in bullying incidents.

Further analysis showed that emotional empathy (the ability to feel with others) and self-monitoring skills were the strongest protective factors against engaging in or tolerating bullying. Conversely, children who struggled to understand their own emotions often lacked the language and skills to navigate social stress without aggression or avoidance.

Conclusion

This study confirms that bullying behavior in primary school children is strongly associated with cognitive and emotional development. Aggressors tend to exhibit poor executive function, weak impulse control, and low empathy. Victims frequently show cognitive avoidance, social anxiety, and difficulty articulating emotional discomfort. The research supports the view that bullying prevention must go beyond external behavior management to focus on internal cognitive and emotional processes.

Recommendations

1. Integrate emotional literacy programs into school curricula starting from grade one.
2. Conduct annual cognitive and emotional assessments to identify high-risk students.
3. Provide targeted intervention for students with low emotional intelligence, including coaching and group therapy.

4. Use role-play and storytelling to build social understanding and empathy in classrooms.
5. Train educators to recognize cognitive-emotional warning signs of potential bullying behavior.
6. Promote problem-solving clubs and logic-based games to enhance cognitive flexibility.
7. Offer resilience training and coping skills workshops for vulnerable students.
8. Collaborate with child psychologists to embed diagnostic feedback into the teaching process.

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