

**EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL BULLYING, PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING
AND STRESS IN NORTHERN IRELAND:
FINDINGS FROM THE 2005 YOUNG LIFE AND TIMES SURVEY**

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Abstract

Comparatively little is known about the nature, incidence and correlates of bully/victim problems in the Northern Ireland school system. The present study examined the prevalence of self-reported experiences of bully/victim problems and the relationship between such experiences and levels of stress and psychological well-being among a representative sample of 819 16 year olds who participated in the 2005 'Young Life and Times Survey' (YLTS: ARK, 2006). Bully/victim problems among these adolescents were pervasive. Personal experience of involvement in bully/victim problems was associated with self-reported stress and impaired psychological well-being. Findings are interpreted within the context of previous data from YLTS and the wider national and international literature on bully/victim problems.

Keywords: bully, victim, Northern Ireland, health, well-being

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Although the international literature on the nature, prevalence, and correlates of bullying is burgeoning (see Smith, Morita, Junger-Tas, Olweus, Catalano, & Slee, 1999 for a review), much of this work has been sporadic in nature on a country and region basis. Typical of such a sporadic approach has been much of the research undertaken on bully/victim problems among school pupils in Northern Ireland, with studies differing in terms of the emphasis placed upon methodological issues such as the time-reference period for the events to have happened within (e., previous week, previous two months, previous year), and whether or not questionnaires are used that would allow for international comparisons (Callaghan & Joseph, 1995; Collins & Bell, 1996; Collins, Mc Aleavy, & Adamson, 2002, 2004; Grant, 1996; Livesey, Mc Aleavy, Donegan, Duffy, O'Hagan, Adamson & White, 2007; Taylor, 1996).

In a move towards presenting a more coherent and systematic report of the prevalence of bully/victim problems and the association between involvement and health and well-being among the Province's school pupils, Mc Guckin and Lewis (2006) and Mc Guckin, Lewis, and Cummins (in press) have reported upon data collected as part of the representative 'Youth Life and Times Survey' (YLTS). The YLTS is conducted annually by ARK, the Northern Ireland Social and Political Archive (a joint project by the two Northern Ireland universities; University of Ulster and the Queen's University of Belfast see <http://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt>). YLTS records the attitudes and experiences of 16

year olds in Northern Ireland. Whilst the YLTS is not focused solely upon school related issues (e.g., environment, politics), it's representative nature presents meaningful data on issues that affect Northern Irish adolescents.

The first YLTS to include bully/victim related questions (1998, n = 397) included the question 'Would you say that students at your school get bullied by other students'. Based upon responses to this question, Mc Guckin and Lewis (2006) concluded that the incidence of school bullying in Northern Ireland (76.8%, n = 305) may be higher than across the rest of the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland and more geographically distant locations (Smith et al., 1999).

The second YLTS to include bully/victim related questions (2004, n = 824) included the question 'I was bullied at school'. In recognising the dearth of information regarding adolescent psychological well-being in Northern Ireland, the 2004 survey also included the General Health Questionnaire - 12 item (GHQ-12: Goldberg & Williams, 1988), a measure of psychological well-being (e.g., 'Lost much sleep over worry?') and two stress-related questions ('How often do you get stressed?', 'What makes you stressed?').

In a distinct difference from the 1998 data, Mc Guckin et al. (in press) concluded that just 13% (n = 107) of respondents were bullied 'sometimes or more often'. In terms of psychological impairment, almost one quarter (23.8%, n = 189) were scoring high enough on the (GHQ-12: Goldberg & Williams, 1988) to satisfy the criteria for 'caseness' (i.e., above a threshold score of four: Mc Whirter, 2004), thus exhibiting sufficiently impaired psychological well-being so as to be require referral (Goldberg & Williams, 1988). Whilst nearly two-thirds (65.7%, n = 541) of respondents who

answered the first of the stress related questions reported being stressed ‘sometimes or more often’, in line with the low incidence of victimization recorded, just five respondents specifically made reference to bully/victim problems when answering the other stress related question.

The aim of the present study was to supplement the research findings previously reported in Northern Ireland by examining the experience of school bullying among Northern Ireland adolescents by examining data collected as part of the 2005 iteration of the YLTS. Extending the 1998 and 2004 surveys, the 2005 survey drew upon the wording of standardized bully/victim questions that have been employed in previous Northern Irish and international research (e.g., Collins et al., 2002, 2004 [Northern Ireland]; Fonzi, Genta, Menesini, Bacchini, Bonino, & Costabile, 1999 [Italy]; Mooij, 1992 [The Netherlands]; O’Moore, Kirkham, & Smith, 1997 [Republic of Ireland]; Ortega & Mora-Merchán, 1999 [Spain]; Pateraki & Houndoumadi, 2001 [Greece], Tomás de Almeida, 1999 [Portugal]; Whitney & Smith, 1993 [England]). With such a refocusing, the direct comparability of the 2005 data to previous YLTS findings, and the international literature is increased. In a further extension of the 2004 YLTS focus on psychological well-being, respondents also completed the GHQ-12 (Goldberg & Williams, 1988) and the same two stress related questions.

Method

Respondents

A total of 2,049 16 year olds were identified from the Child Benefit Register as eligible participants for the survey (Child Benefit is a non means-tested State Benefit that is paid

to parents for each of their children). Criteria for eligibility for participation were based on being: (i) born in, and living in, Northern Ireland; (ii) celebrating their 16th birthday during February 2005; and (iii) having Child Benefit claimed on their behalf. Of those invited to participate, 819 (40.0%: n = 339 male; 41.4%: n = 478, female: 58.4%) replied to the survey either by: (i) post (n = 783, 95.6%), (ii) online (n = 33, 4.0%), or (iii) by telephone (n = 5, 0.6%). All respondents who participated were eligible for entry into a prize draw for £500.00.

Measures

In 2005, the YLTS questionnaires included eight items relating to personal experience of bully/victim problems, the GHQ-12 (Goldberg & Williams, 1988); and two stress-related questions.

Bully/Victim Questions

Respondents were presented with eight bully/victim related questions within the 'Education' module presented as Question 22 through Question 29 inclusive). These questions were: 'Would you say that students at your school get bullied by other students?' (Question 22: also presented in the 1998 survey), 'Are there particular staff at your school whose job is to deal with bullying?' (Question 23: also presented in the 1998 survey), 'Do you think that most people – if they were bullied – would or would not go and talk to one of these members of staff?' (Question 24: also presented in the 1998 survey), 'In general, do you think your school provides real help for people who are bullied or not?' (Question 25: also presented in the 1998 survey), 'Have you yourself

ever been bullied in school?’ (Question 26: new question), ‘How often have you yourself been bullied at school in the last two months in school?’ (Question 27: new question), ‘Have you yourself ever taken part in bullying other students?’ (Question 28: new question), and ‘How often have you taken part in bullying other students in school in the last two months in school?’ (Question 29: new question).

Whilst the response options for some questions (i.e., Questions 26 and 28) was either ‘Yes’ or ‘No’, other questions (i.e., Questions 23 and 25) provided an additional option of ‘Don’t know’. Response options for other questions (i.e., Questions 27 and 29) ranged from ‘A lot’, ‘A little’, to ‘Not at all’, while one question included a further response option to this of ‘Don’t know’ (i.e., Question 22). Response options for the remaining question (i.e., Question 24) were ‘Would talk to them’, ‘Would not talk to them’, ‘It depends’, and ‘Don’t know’.

Psychological Well-Being

To explore psychological well-being, respondents were asked to complete the 12-item version of the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12: Goldberg & Williams, 1988) (presented as Question 32 through Question 43 inclusive in the YLTS questionnaire). The GHQ-12 (Goldberg & Williams, 1988) is a self-administered screening measure for the detection of minor psychiatric disorders (i.e., non-psychotic psychological impairment) in community and non-psychiatric settings. It is sensitive to changes in normal functioning ‘over the past few weeks’ and has the ability to differentiate between ‘cases’ (i.e., the probability that the individual has a minor psychiatric disorder) and ‘non-cases’. The GHQ-12 (Goldberg & Williams, 1988) has been utilised in previous

Northern Ireland based surveys (see Mullins, Lewis, & Mc Guckin, 2002). Examples of questions include: 'Have you recently been able to concentrate on whatever you are doing?' (Question 32) and 'Have you recently felt under constant strain?' (Question 36). Respondents are requested to rate themselves on a four-point severity scale according to how they have experienced each item in the recent past. Whilst the response options for some question (i.e., Questions 33, 36, 37, 40, 41, and 42) ranged from 'not at all', through 'no more than usual', 'rather more than usual' to 'much more than usual', response options for the remaining questions (i.e., Questions 32, 34, 35, 38, 39, and 43) ranged from 'better / more so than usual', through 'same as usual', 'less than usual', to 'much less than usual'. All items were recoded so that higher scores were indicative of poorer levels of psychological well-being (1 = 0, 2 = 1, 3 = 2, 4 = 3). No items were reverse scored. The GHQ-12 (Goldberg & Williams, 1988) may be scored in a variety of manners (e.g., Likert, continuous, 'caseness'). In the current research, analyses were undertaken using both the Likert and 'caseness' approach. In the Likert approach, responses are summed across the scale with higher scores indicative of impaired psychological well-being. In the caseness approach (i.e., dichotomous scoring: 0, 0, 1, 1), respondents scoring above a predetermined threshold score (e.g. 4: Mc Whirter, 2004) are deemed to be exhibiting enough impaired psychological well-being to be considered a 'case' (Goldberg & Williams, 1988).

Stress

In relation to personal experience of stress, respondents were presented with two questions: 'How often do you get stressed?' (Question 44), assessed across a five-point

scale (i.e., 'Very often', 'Often', 'Sometimes', 'Rarely', and 'Never'), and 'What makes you stressed?' (Question 45) assessed with an open response.

Procedure

Letters were posted to the homes of identified respondents in August and October 2005. Enclosed with the letter were the YLTS questionnaire and a further letter providing background information concerning the survey. After one to four weeks, a reminder postcard was posted to those who had not yet responded. Respondents were provided with three means of completing the questionnaire: (i) by post, (ii) online, or (iii) telephone.

Results

Personal Experience of Bully/Victim Problems:

Table One presents the personal experiences of bully/victim problems for Questions 26 and 28.

<Insert Table 1 here>

As can be seen in Table One, whilst 30.4% (n = 244) of respondents reported that they had been bullied in school, the majority of students (92.5%, n = 740) reported that they had not bullied another student.

Table Two below presents summary responses regarding the frequency of bully/victim problems.

<Insert Table 2 here>

In terms of being victimized, it can be seen from Table 2 that over one-quarter of respondents (27.7%, n = 67) were bullied ‘a little’ or a lot’. Whilst over half of respondents reported that they had not bullied other students (55.9%, n = 33), 40.7% (n = 24) did admit to bullying others ‘a little’. A further 3.4% (n = 2) admitted bullying other students ‘a lot’.

Categorising Respondents as Victims, Bullies, and Bully/Victims

Four of the questions posed regarding ‘involvement’ and ‘frequency’ (questions 26 to 29; Tables 1 and 2) were derived from the ‘goldstandard’ questions in Olweus’ Bully Victim Questionnaire (BVQ: Olweus, 1989, 1996). Despite the fact that the response options provided in this research differ slightly from Olweus’, useful comparisons are still possible between this research and previous Northern Irish and international research that has utilised the BVQ.

Respondents were categorised as a victim ‘sometimes or more often’ if they responded in the affirmative to Question 26 and either ‘a little’ or ‘a lot’ to Question 27. ‘Frequent’ victims responded at the ‘a lot’ frequency level to Question 27. Respondents were similarly classified as being a bully based upon their responses to Questions 28 and 29. Respondents were categorised as a being a bully/victim ‘sometimes or more often’ if

they reported in the affirmative to both Question 26 and 28 and either ‘a little’ or ‘a lot’ to Question 27 and 29. ‘Frequent’ bully/victims responded at the ‘a lot’ frequency level to both Question 27 and 29.

Based on this approach, 60.2% (n = 53) of respondents were victims ‘sometimes or more often’, 9.1% (n = 8) were victims ‘frequently’, 2.3% (n = 2) were bullies ‘frequently’, and 28.4% (n = 25) were bully/victims ‘sometimes or more often’.

Knowledge of Victimization at School and School Management / Policy

In response to the question, ‘Would you say that students at your school get bullied by other students?’ (Question 22), whilst 9.6% (n = 77) stated that students did not get bullied and 9.7% (n = 78) stated that they did not know whether other students were bullied, over three-quarters of respondents (80.8%, n = 650) reported that students at their school were bullied either ‘A little’ (69.7%, n = 561) or ‘A lot’ (11.1%, n = 89).

Regarding the question ‘Are there particular staff at your school whose job is to deal with bullying?’ (Question 23), whilst over two-thirds of respondents (68.8%, n = 548) reported that there was such a person in their school, 31.3% (n = 249) of respondents reported that there was no such staff (14.2%, n = 113) or that they did not know of the availability of such staff in their school (17.1%, n = 136).

In relation to the question ‘Do you think that most people – if they were bullied – would or would not go and talk to one of these members of staff?’ (Question 24), whilst almost one-quarter (22.8%, n = 125) of respondents thought that most people would not go and talk to one of these members of staff, 16.2% (n = 89) felt the opposite. A further

59.5% (n = 326) reported that 'It depends' and 1.5% (n = 8) stated that they 'Did not know'.

When asked the question 'In general, do you think your school provides real help for people who are bullied or not?' (Question 25), whilst over half of the respondents (56.3%, n = 444) reported that the school did provide real help for victims of bullying behaviour, over one-quarter of respondents (26.1%, n = 206) felt that the school did not provide such help and 17.6% (n = 139) reported that they did not know if the school provided real help for victims.

Psychological Well-being.

With regard to psychological well-being, an average score of 10.15 (SD = 5.8) was calculated for the total responding sample (n = 804), thus indicating a low level of psychological impairment among the respondents. Furthermore, utilising the 'caseness' approach to scoring, it was found that almost one quarter of the sample (21.4%, n = 172) were scoring high enough on the measure to satisfy the criteria for 'caseness'.

Stress

In relation to the question 'How often do you get stressed?' (Question 44), nearly two-thirds of respondents (64.7%, n = 522) reported being stressed 'Sometimes' (37.3%, n = 301), 'Often' (18.7%, n = 151), or 'Very Often' (8.7%, n = 70). Over one-third of respondents (35.4%, n = 286) reported that they 'Never' (9.3%, n = 75) or 'Rarely' (26.1%, n = 211) got stressed.

In relation to the question ‘What makes you stressed?’ (Question 45), 651 responses were recorded for this question. However, only six of these responses specifically referred to bully/victim problems. These responses were: ‘An older brother who bullies me’ (Respondent 12), ‘Exams and what people think and say about me also whenever I was being bullied at school I was under a lot of stress at home and in school’ (Respondent 115), ‘Family trouble or bullying’ (Respondent 200), ‘Getting bullied, underwent surgery on cleft lip/palate, have been picked on my whole life because of it, and stress buildup of waiting to see if I am accepted into army’ (Respondent 231), ‘School work, friends, family, work bullies, having no confidence’ (Respondent 454), and ‘Worrying about different things, being bullied’ (Respondent 647).

Involvement in Bully/Victim Problems, Psychological Well-being, and Stress

In order to examine the association between experience of victimization, psychological well-being, and stress, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated. These results show that there were significant associations between victimization (Question 26) and psychological well-being (GHQ-12) ($r = -0.16$, $p < 0.01$, 1-tailed), and between victimization and stress ($r = -0.17$, $p < 0.01$, 1-tailed). There was also a significant association between scores on the GHQ-12 and stress ($r = -0.49$, $p < 0.01$, 1-tailed).

In relation to the ‘caseness’ approach to scoring the GHQ-12, an independent samples t-test calculated a significant difference in the average score between those classified as a ‘case’ and a ‘non-case’ on the stress related question ($t [793] = 12.28$, $p < 0.05$, 2-tailed). Furthermore, there was a significant difference in the average score between these two groups on the victimization question ($t [237.24] = 4.73$, $p < 0.05$, 2-

tailed. However, no statistically significant differences were uncovered between the bully/victim actor groups (i.e., victim, bully, and bully/victim categories at the 'sometimes or more often' and 'frequent' levels) in relation to 'caseness'.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to examine the experience of bully/victim problems and health related indices among a representative sample of adolescents in Northern Ireland by examining data collected as part of the 2005 YLTS dataset. From the present analysis four points are worthy of note.

First, the data clearly indicates that whilst the incidence of victimization (Question 26: 'Have you yourself ever been bullied in school?'; 30.4%, n = 244) within the peer groups of these respondents was quite high, it was lower in comparison with the data collected via the same survey in the previous year using a slightly different question (2004: 'I was bullied at school' ['sometimes or more often']; 13%, n = 107). In attempts to define a time-reference period for these bullying events to have happened (Question 27: 'How often have you yourself been bullied at school in the last two months in school?'), 27.7% (n = 67) of respondents reported that they were bullied either 'A little' (24%, n = 58) or 'A lot' (3.7%, n = 9) in this time reference period. In relation to perceptions of whether other pupils in the school were bullied (Question 22: 'Would you say that students at your school get bullied by other students?') the high incidence rate reported (80.8, n = 650: 'A little' or 'A lot') mirrors the high level reported in the 1998 survey using the same question (76.8%, n = 305). Thus, whilst personal experience of victimization increased across the 2004 and 2005 iterations of the survey, with most

personal experiences of victimization occurring within the previous two months, perceptions of the vulnerability of other students to bullying behaviours remained constantly high. Such findings, unfortunately, re-confirm that significant numbers of children and adolescents suffer peer victimization in the school environment. A core attribute of educators is their ability to be 'creative' and 'imaginative' with the curriculum. In attempts to decrease the incidence of bully/victim problems and increase the success of education programs, educators should further consider how to effectively address such issues through all aspects of the curriculum. Indeed, to aid such work, it is imperative that community involvement and government level support be available.

Second, in relation to participation in bullying behaviours (Question 28: 'Have you yourself ever taken part in bullying other students?'), whilst just 7.5% (n = 60) of respondents stated that they had taken part in bullying other students, nearly half of these respondents (44.1%, n = 26) reported doing so 'A little' or 'A lot' in the previous two months (Question 29: 'How often have you taken part in bullying other students in school in the last two months in school?'). No comparison with previous survey data is possible as these two questions were presented for the first time in this iteration of the survey. Thus, self-reports of involvement in bullying behaviours were relatively low. This finding of fewer self-reported bullies than self-reported victims is in line with previous research in the area. Considering that the respondents in the current study were 16 years of age, it is worrying to find that not all of these adolescents have developed appropriate interpersonal communication strategies that do not rely on the harassment of others. Intervention and prevention programs exist that help educators address such issues within

the school environment. With diligence and attention, such programs exhibit positive results (see Smith, Pepler, & Rigby, 2004 for a review).

So as to facilitate interpretation of data to the local (e.g., Collins et al., 2002, 2004) and international research in the area (e.g., Smith et al., 1999) that has utilised the BVQ (Olweus, 1989, 1996), 'actor' groups were constructed (i.e., victim, bully, bully/victim). Based upon this approach, 60.2% (n = 53) of respondents were victims 'sometimes or more often', 9.1% (n = 8) were victims 'frequently', 2.3% (n = 2) were bullies 'frequently', and 28.4% (n = 25) were bully-victims 'sometimes or more often'. Thus, a significant proportion of these adolescents experienced bully/victim problems in the recent past. Whilst the key 'victimization' and 'bullying' items in this survey (Questions 27 and 29) mimic the wording of those in Olweus' (1989, 1996) 'gold standard' BVQ, the full range of BVQ response options were not used in this survey (i.e., 'I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months', 'It has only happened once or twice', 'Two or three times a month', 'About once a week' and 'Several times a week'). Thus, whilst 'direct' interpretation to local (e.g., Collins et al., 2002, 2004) and international studies (e.g., Smith et al., 1999) that have utilised the BVQ is impaired, it is still possible to offer a meaningful interpretation of the data. It is evident that a large number of the respondents in this survey experienced victimization on an ongoing basis. This figure (60.2%, n = 53) greatly exceeds what could normally be expected in studies utilising the BVQ. Such data is, naturally, a cause for concern for the education system in Northern Ireland. Indeed, it is also evident that whilst a large number of the respondents were victimized regularly, these same individuals also self-reported that they visited such harassment and aggression on their school colleagues regularly (i.e., the

bully/victim group). Bully/victims suffer increased personal, health, and educational risk due to their dual status. Traditionally, educators have understood bully/victim problems as involving a dyadic relationship between a bully and a victim. Educators should be alert to the significant numbers of pupils who satisfy the criteria for membership of both categories simultaneously.

Third, in relation to help seeking behaviour and perceptions of available support within the school environment, whilst over half of the respondents (56.3%, n = 444) felt that their school did provide real help for victims of bullying behaviour (Question 25: 'In general, do you think your school provides real help for people who are bullied or not?'), the remaining 43.7% of respondents did not feel that this was the case (26.1% [n = 206] replied 'No' and 17.6% [n = 139] replied 'Don't know'). These data remain broadly similar to those from 1998 when the same question was posed (50.4% [n = 200], 49.7%, n = 197]). Over two-thirds of respondents (68.8%, n = 548) reported that there was a particular member of staff within the school whose job it was to deal with bullying (Question 23: 'Are there particular staff at your school whose job is to deal with bullying?'). This finding is positive in comparison to the data from 1998, when 58.2% (n = 231) of respondents reported that there was a member(s) of staff with responsibility for dealing with bully/victim problems. However, demonstrating a lack of faith in this respect, 61% (n = 334) of respondents reported that 'It depends' or 'Did not know' in relation to whether or not they would talk to one of these members of staff (Question 24: 'Do you think that most people – if they were bullied – would or would not go and talk to one of these members of staff?'). Compared to when this question was originally posed in 1998, this lack of faith in the process has nearly doubled (1998: 33.8%, n = 134).

Whilst 16.2% (n = 89) of respondents thought that most people would go and talk to one of these members of staff (1998: 25.7%, n = 102), almost one-quarter (22.8%, n = 125) of respondents felt the opposite (1998: 40.6%, n = 161).

The responses to these three questions in the 2005 survey are interesting and important, considering that legislation was introduced in Northern Ireland in 2003 (Department of Education for Northern Ireland, 2003) regarding the management of bully/victim problems (see Mc Guckin & Lewis, 2008).

Whilst no specific legislation existed at the time of the 1998 survey, Mc Guckin and Lewis (2008) found that in a pre-legislative climate, schools in the Province were actually proactive in the management of such problems. Nearly half of the adolescents in the current survey did not feel that their school provided real support for victims of bullying behaviour. Whilst a large number of respondents were aware of the existence of nominated staff to deal with such issues, many respondents reported that they would not approach any of these staff if they were being bullied. In considering these findings, it would be prudent to conduct further research exploring the efficacy 'on the ground' of the recent legislation in the area (e.g., implementation of policies).

As previously highlighted, research regarding bully/victim problems among Northern Irish school pupils has been sporadic. For example, there has been a lack of consensus / consistency regarding: (i) the appropriate age group(s) to sample, (ii) how involvement in bully/victim problems should be assessed, (iii) time reference periods for when involvement should have occurred, (iv) whether incidence reports should include all categories of actor involvement (e.g., bully, victim, bully/victim, bystander). Whilst such issues are by no means isolated to Northern Irish bully/victim research, such a lack

of consensus / consistency regarding these key methodological issues hampers meaningful interpretation of data across studies, not only with the previous Northern Irish research, but across the international plane (e.g., Smith et al., 1999). Indeed, such issues regarding interpretation can be clearly seen in attempts here to meaningfully compare incidence data from across three iterations of this YLTS (i.e., 1998, 2004, 2005). Whilst the 2005 survey has clearly moved towards the exploration of bully/victim problems from a baseline that encompasses previous items utilised in the 1998 and 2004 iterations of the survey, as well as items based upon the measurement literature in the area, this approach should continue to be adopted (Mc Guckin & Lewis, 2003, 2006).

Fourth, in relation to stress and psychological well-being, whilst nearly two-thirds of respondents (64.7%, n = 522) reported being stressed, almost one quarter (21.4%, n = 172) were scoring high enough on the GHQ-12 (Goldberg & Williams, 1988) so as to require psychiatric referral. Furthermore, direct experience of involvement in bully/victim problems was significantly associated with self-reports of stress and impaired psychological well-being. Such findings re-emphasise the problematic intersection between adolescence development and the pressures of the school environment. Indeed, the results demonstrate that those directly involved in bully/victim problems suffer more than their non-involved colleagues. With such information, care and attention should be directed to such issues within the adolescent school going population.

Thus, in conclusion, it can be asserted that the YLTS has added significantly to the knowledge base regarding bully/victim problems in Northern Ireland. Such representative surveys yield important data for researchers interested in understanding the

nature, incidence and correlates of bully/victim problems among Northern Ireland school pupils. However, future research should operate from a more methodologically robust perspective with a priori designed content that enables meaningful national and cross-national comparisons.

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Table One: Involvement in Bully/victim Problems

Question	Yes	No
Have you yourself ever been bullied in school?	30.4%	69.6%
	n = 244	n = 559
Have you yourself ever taken part in bullying other students?	7.5%	92.5%
	n = 60	n = 740

Table Two: Frequency of Involvement in Bully/victim Problems

Question	A lot	A little	Not at all
How often have you yourself been bullied at school in the last two months in school?	3.7% n = 9	24% n = 58	72.3% n = 175
How often have you taken part in bullying other students in school in the last two months in school?	3.4% n = 2	40.7% n = 24	55.9% n = 33