

Bullying: What you need to know as a University Student

FACT SHEET

Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgendered, and Questioning Students (LGBTQ)

Students who are bullied about their sexual orientation experience social rejection from others, as well as encounter physical and verbal abuse at higher rates than the general population.

Sexual minority students are 2-3 times more likely to attempt suicide in comparison than other peers who have been bullied.

A U.S. study showed that 53 per cent of sexual minority students thought about committing suicide or harming themselves as a result of bullying.



What is bullying?

A leading authority on bullying, Dan Olweus, distinguishes bullying from other forms of interpersonal conflict or aggression with these specific elements:

1. **Intent** - the aggressor has an intent to harm or offend another;
2. **Frequency** – the aggression is repeated over time; and
3. **Imbalance of Power** – there is an uneven distribution of power between the aggressor and the person being bullied.

While bullying among peers tends to peak in middle school, it remains common among college and university students. North American males and females experience verbal, physical, and social bullying at similar rates while attending post-secondary institutions, and nearly 25% of undergraduate students say they have been bullied at least once or twice. Not surprisingly, one study found that almost 75% of students who said they had been bullied at a Canadian college had also been bullied in elementary and high school. Although bullying traditionally occurs through person-to-person contact, a growing phenomenon is to bully someone through electronic means; otherwise known as cyber-bullying.

Cyber bullying occurs when someone humiliates or torments someone through the use of an electronic device. Cyber bullying has been categorized to include flaming, online harassment, cyber stalking, denigration, masquerading, 'outing', and exclusion. Often times, perpetrators remain anonymous since electronic gadgets allow identities to be altered or hidden. Some say the effects of cyber bullying are even worse than traditional forms because it allows tormentors to be relentless in their intent to harm, while victims feel unable to escape.

Typologies of bullying

Someone is bullied when someone with more perceived authority or actual power recurrently tries to harm them. This may be through:

Verbal Bullying – using intimidating, threatening, or other forms of hurtful language. One person may be a 'ring leader' (overtly or covertly), using power and words to hurt another in social situations or through the use of electronic communications.

Physical Bullying – includes bodily assault of a person or infringing on the privacy or personal space of another. This may occur during extracurricular activities, like sports or clubs, when one or more students use excessive force on another.

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Individuals who experience bullying need support. Helping to identify a trustworthy person, such as a family member or friend, can be helpful in coping with stress from being bullied and rebuilding self-esteem.

At UFV, free, confidential help is available:

Personal Counseling

Services: In Abbotsford, call (604) 854-4528, B214; In Chilliwack, call (604) 795-2808; Building E.

Human Rights & Conflict

Resolution Office: For students, faculty, and staff. Free confidential service can be obtained by contacting kim.white@ufv.ca or calling (604)-864-4660.

UFV Pride Network: is an example of a student group or club to join. Pride is a student-run organization of LGBTQ & straight allies. To join this group for drop-in meetings or to discuss any issue visit

<http://www.ufv.ca/pride/>

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Rejection or Isolation - deliberately excluding someone from social or group interactions. This is especially problematic for international students because these students are already more likely to deal with social exclusion due to cultural or ethnic differences.

Racial Harassment – includes racially based threats, taunts, abuse, or insults that may place someone at a disadvantage or create a hostile environment. Examples of this form of harassment may include racist name-calling, jokes, or graffiti. This is a documented problem among Canadian Aboriginal students with more than 80% of these students reporting some form of racial discrimination.

Sexual Harassment – definitions range from “unwanted sexual attention from a person who knows or ought reasonably to know that such attention is unwanted”, to “implied or expressed threat of reprisal or actual reprisal for refusal to comply with a sexually oriented request”

Why is bullying an important issue?

People who are tormented by bullying are at increased risk for mental health problems, including depression and anxiety. Studies have linked racial harassment to psychological strain, depression, and nervousness. Those who are tormented by bullying, harassment and intimidation are also at increased risk for developing low self-confidence, and a variety of negative academic outcomes including having a decreased ability to concentrate, poor grades, and irregular class attendance. Bullying also contributes to the likelihood of committing suicide.

Those who bully others may develop a distorted self-image, wielding aggression as a form of power. These individuals are at a higher risk for developing a mental illness, failing to complete educational programs, inconsistent employment patterns, and a heightened risk for criminal involvement, including child and spousal abuse.

What can be done about bullying on university campuses?

Everyone can promote a more inclusive university environment. Universities can promote an understanding of acceptable behaviour through services and policies geared toward educating the entire university population. Comprehensive policies reinforce respectful relationships by promoting inclusive environments for all students. Educational programs can teach students and faculty effective means of offering guidance and support to those facing relational aggression, as well as for those perpetrating it. Campuses that support sexual minority students increase overall perceptions of acceptance and safety among all students on campus. Furthermore, welcoming a diverse faculty and student body to the campus, and developing programs that cultivate understanding and respect for all racial groups creates a more productive learning environment.