

High-school girls who consider themselves attractive are more likely to be targets for bullying

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University of Alberta researcher Lindsey Leenaars found high school females who viewed themselves as attractive had a 35 percent higher risk of being indirectly victimized. This study was recently published in the journal *Aggressive Behavior*.

University of Alberta Educational Psychology PhD student Lindsey Leenaars has completed a study that assessed what types of high school students are being indirectly victimized. This includes being involved in emotionally damaging scenarios such as receiving hurtful anonymous notes, being socially excluded, or having rumours spread about them, including threats of physical harm.

Leenaars analyzed data that was collected in Ontario in 2003. More than 2,300 students aged 12–18 filled out an anonymous questionnaire asking them questions, including how they rate their attractiveness, their sexual activity, their friendships and school social problems.

Leenaars found the females who viewed themselves as attractive had a 35 per cent increased chance of being indirectly victimized. Conversely, for males who perceived themselves as good looking, their risk of being bullied decreased by 25 per cent. Leenaars also found older teens (aged 16–18) were at a 35 per cent increased risk of being victimized if they were sexually active.

Leenaars says this information could be used to raise awareness amongst parents, teachers and counselors. She adds it would also be helpful when schools are working on a variety of anti-bullying programs to include all students, not just those who may be traditionally perceived as victims.

“The findings have important implications for the development of interventions designed to reduce peer victimization, in that victims of indirect aggression may represent a broad group.”

Source: University of Alberta

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