

Research finds bullies and victims three times more likely to have suicidal thoughts by age 11

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as both a victim and a bully – are three times more likely to have suicidal thoughts by the time they reach 11 years old, according to research from the University of Warwick.

In a paper published in the latest issue of the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, the researchers found children who are both victims and bullies ('bully-victims'), are at highly increased risk of considering suicide, or have planned and engaged in suicidal or self-harming behaviour by 11-12 years of age. These increased odds were not explained by other factors family circumstances or pre-existing emotional problems.

The team looked at data from 6,043 children in the Children of the 90s study at the University of Bristol to assess bullying between four and 10 years and the prevalence of suicidal thoughts at 11-12 years old.

The study used information collected from parents and teachers, as well as the child, to see how common bullying or victim behaviour was.

They found that, compared to children who were never bullied, 'bully-victims' were three times as likely to have suicidal thoughts, and that those who were bullied over a long period of time were six times more likely to consider suicide.

Those who bully others but never become victims (pure [bullies](#)) were also at increased risk for suicide thoughts and suicidal or self-harming behaviour but the findings were not as consistent.

One of the study's authors Professor Dieter Wolke is based in the Department of Psychology and Warwick Medical School at the University of Warwick.

He said: "Our study findings suggest that suicide-related behaviour is a serious problem for pre-adolescent youth: 4.8% of this community population reported [suicidal thoughts](#) and 4.6% reported suicidal or self-injurious behaviour. Health practitioners should be aware of the relationship between bullying and suicide, and should recognise the very real risks that may be evident earlier in development than commonly thought.

"Targeting intervention schemes from primary school onward is paramount, and could help to prevent chronic exposure to bullying, which is especially harmful."

More information: 'Involvement in Bullying and Suicide-related Behaviour at 11 Years: A Prospective Birth Cohort Study', *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*.

Provided by University of Warwick

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