

Study details bullying involvement for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder

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A study based on information collected from 920 parents suggests an estimated 46.3 percent of adolescents with an autism spectrum disorder were the victims of bullying, according to a report published Online First by *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*.

Bullying involves negative actions toward a peer and is characterized by a power imbalance – physical, social or cognitive – between the victim and the perpetrator. Relatively little research has examined bullying involvement among adolescents with an [autism spectrum disorder](#) (ASD), according to the study background.

Paul R. Sterzing, Ph.D., M.S.S.W., previously of Washington University, St. Louis but now affiliated with the University of California, Berkeley, and colleagues used nationally representative surveys to identify the prevalence of bullying involvement, compare prevalence rates of bullying involvement with adolescents with developmental disabilities that overlap with the core deficits of an ASD, and identify the social ecological correlates of bullying involvement.

The prevalence of bullying involvement for adolescents with an ASD was 46.3 percent for victimization and was "substantially higher" than the national prevalence estimates for the general adolescent population (10.6 percent). The rates of perpetration of bullying (14.8 percent) and victimization/perpetration (8.9 percent, i.e. those who perpetrate and are victimized), were about equivalent to national estimates found among typically developing adolescents, according to the study results.

Victimization was related to having a non-Hispanic ethnicity, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, lower social skills, some form of conversational ability, and more classes in general education.

Perpetration was correlated with being white, having attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, and getting together with friends at least once a week. Victimization/perpetration was associated with being white non-Hispanic, having attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and getting together with friends at least once a week, the results indicate.

"Future interventions should incorporate content that addresses the core deficits of adolescents with an ASD, which limits their verbal ability to report bullying incidents," the authors comment. "Schools should incorporate strategies that address conversational difficulties and the unique challenges of those with comorbid conditions."

The authors also concluded: "Inclusive classrooms need to increase the social integration of [adolescents](#) with an ASD into protective peer groups while also enhancing the empathy and social skills of typically developing students toward their peers with an ASD and other developmental disabilities."

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