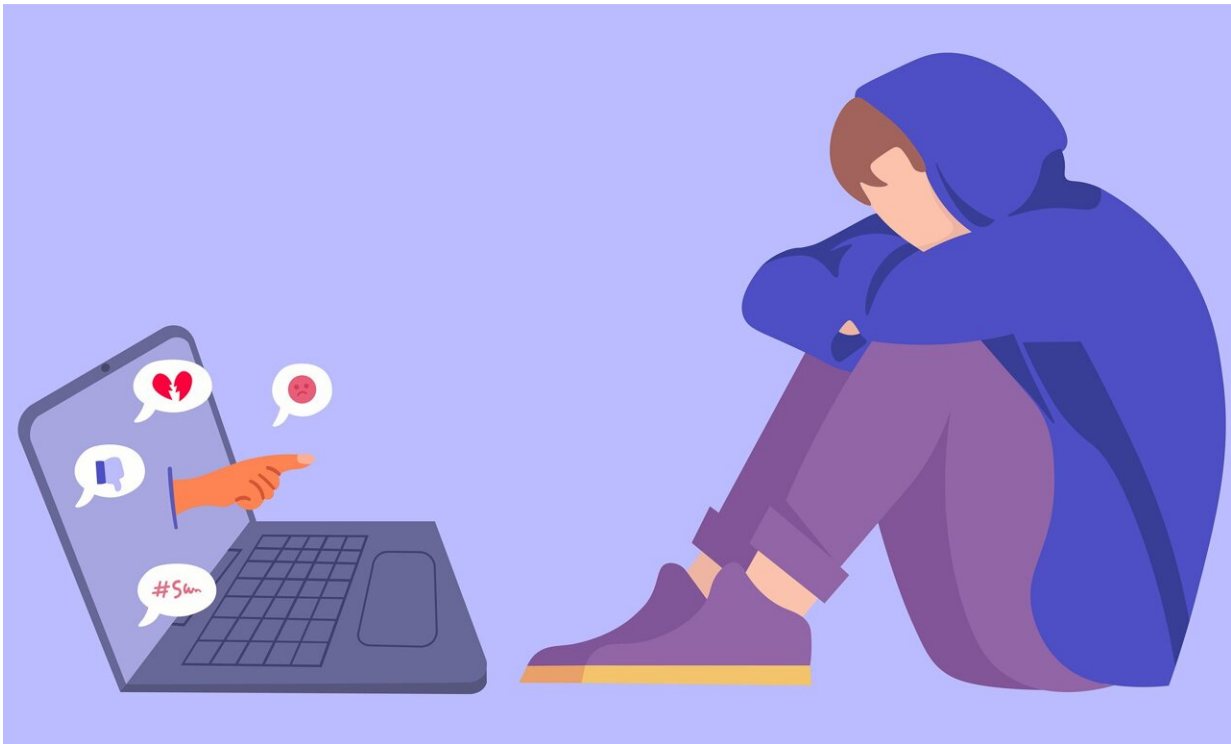


Being bullied is associated with mental distress and suicide attempts in teens

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According to the study, some forms of bullying are significantly correlated with feeling sad or hopeless and attempting suicide. Credit: HtcHnm, Pixabay, CC0 (<https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/>)

Some forms of bullying are significantly correlated with feeling sad or hopeless and attempting suicide, according to a new study published this week in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* by John Rovers of Drake

University, U.S., and colleagues. The correlation is highest when teens are bullied based on their sexual orientation or gender orientation, the study found.

School bullying is a common problem, with research estimating that as many as 30% of American youth suffer from being bullied. There is growing evidence that being bullied can have lasting effects on students' well-being, health and social adjustment.

The authors of the present study used data from the 2018 Iowa Youth Survey, a broad questionnaire offered every two or three years to both private and public school students in the 6th, 8th and 11th grade across the state of Iowa. They analyzed 70,451 validated responses for correlations between [mental health](#) and bullying.

Unadjusted odds ratios indicated that students who reported being physically bullied, and those bullied based on religion, were no more likely to report feelings of sadness or hopelessness than students who reported no instances of being bullied.

However, bullying related to [sexual orientation](#) or [gender identity](#), or hurtful sexual jokes and comments, were consistently correlated with feelings of sadness and hopelessness as well as [suicide attempts](#) (OR 1.40–2.84). Cyberbullying, social bullying, and bullying based on race also had significant correlations with mental distress and suicide attempts.

The authors conclude that different types of bullying have different correlations with mental health outcomes, and that a better understanding of these differences could help shape bullying mitigation strategies in schools.

The authors add: "Bullying hurts. It hurts the victim, and it hurts the

bully. Nobody comes out better for the experience."

More information: Sadness, hopelessness and suicide attempts in bullying: Data from the 2018 Iowa youth survey Kaela L. Newman, Daniel S. Alexander, John P. Rovers, *PLoS ONE* (2023). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0281106](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0281106)

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