

# Bullying leads to depression and suicidal thoughts in teens

27 April 2015

High school students subjected to bullying and other forms of harassment are more likely to report being seriously depressed, consider suicide and carry weapons to school, according to findings from a trio of studies reported at the Pediatric Academic Societies meeting in San Diego.

"Teens can be the victim of face-to-face bullying in school, electronic bullying outside of the classroom and dating violence," said Andrew Adesman, MD, senior investigator of all three studies. "Each of these experiences are associated with a range of serious adverse consequences."

All three studies were based on data collected by the US Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) as part of its 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System - a biannual questionnaire of teens in grades 9-12 in all 50 states that is constructed to provide a representative sample of [high school students](#) in the United States.

## A Look at Depression and Suicide

In a study on bullying based on the CDC's survey of high [school students](#) in the United States, Dr. Adesman's team reports that depression and suicide are much more common in teens who have been the victim of bullying in school and/or electronically. Moreover, these risks were additive among teens who were the victim of both forms of bullying. Their study, "Relative Risks of Depression and Suicidal Tendency among Victims of School- and Electronic-Bullying with Co-Risk Factors", presents results from the first national analysis comparing risks associated with the different forms of bullying.

"Although cyber bullying may not pose the same physical threat that face-to-face bullying does, it can be far more hurtful since it can spread like wildfire throughout a student body and take on a life of its own," Dr. Adesman said.

Tammy Pham, the principal investigator, said it was very important to create more effective strategies to prevent bullying in all forms. "Students need to feel safe both in and outside of school," she said. "More needs to be done to reduce bullying and the huge toll it takes on youth."

Ms. Pham will present "Relative Risks of Depression and Suicidal Tendency among Victims of School- and Electronic-Bullying With Co-Risk Factors" as a platform presentation on Monday, April 27, at 12pm in Room 28D at the Convention Center.

## Bullying Impacts School Attendance, Weapon Carrying

In a second study of bullying, "Victimization of High School Students: Impact on School Attendance and Weapon Carrying Behaviors", the investigators found that bullying, physical dating violence and/or sexual dating violence were each associated with teens not attending school or carrying weapons to school.

"Tragically, teens who were victimized in more than one way were especially likely to carry a weapon to school or skip school altogether," said Dr. Adesman, chief of developmental and behavioral pediatrics at Cohen Children's Medical Center in New Hyde Park, NY.

Alexis Tchaconas, the principal investigator of this study, said that bullying and dating violence were more common than many might expect. "The CDC reports that 11 percent of [high school](#) students experience [dating violence](#), and 20 percent report being bullied," she said. "Greater prevention efforts are needed to protect the mental health and physical well-being of our teens".

"Victimization of High School Students: Impact on School Attendance and Weapon Carrying Behaviors" will be a poster presentation on

Monday, April 27th from 4:15 -7:30 PM. It is in poster session No. 3906 in Exhibit Hall EFG at the Convention Center.

### **Who's Carrying Weapons to School?**

The third study focused on teens who were victims of bullying in the past 12 months and investigated whether there are gender differences in the association of carrying a weapon to school.

On the one hand, boys were overall more likely to carry a weapon to school than girls, regardless of victim status. On the other hand, girls who were the victims of bullying were more than three times as likely to carry a weapon as girls who were not victimized; by contrast, male victims were less than twice as likely to carry a weapon compared to male non-victims.

"The prevalence of [school](#) bullying has serious implications for the safety of all students—both the victims of bullying and the non-victims," said Ms. Pham, the principal investigator of this study.

"Girls who have been victimized are much more likely to carry a weapon; unfortunately, the CDC data does not tell us if this is for their own protection or to seek revenge," said Dr. Adesman, the senior investigator. "Effective strategies need to be developed to eliminate [bullying](#) if we want our teens to be safe and enjoy their adolescence."

**More information:** "Gender Differences in Risk of Weapon-Carrying By Adolescents Who Are Victims of Bullying" will be a poster presentation on Monday, April 27th from 4:15 -7:30 PM. It is in poster session #3906 in Exhibit Hall EFG at the Convention Center.

Provided by North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System

APA citation: Bullying leads to depression and suicidal thoughts in teens (2015, April 27) retrieved 22 June 2021 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-04-bullying-depression-suicidal-thoughts-teens.html>

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