



Impact of Bullying on Academic Performance among Students in Private Secondary Boarding Schools in Murree

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the impact of bullying on the academic performance of students in private secondary boarding schools in Murree, as well as its effect on classroom participation and academic engagement. A sample of 200 students was selected to investigate the extent of bullying and its academic consequences. The findings revealed that a considerable proportion of students experience moderate to high levels of bullying within the boarding school environment. The results further indicated that bullying has a significant negative impact on academic performance, as it reduces students' concentration, motivation, and ability to perform well in examinations. In addition, the study found that bullying significantly affects classroom participation and engagement, as victims tend to withdraw from academic activities due to fear, anxiety, and lack of confidence. The study concludes that bullying creates a challenging learning environment that hinders students' academic development and overall school experience. It is recommended that school administrations implement effective anti-bullying policies, provide counseling support, and promote a positive and inclusive school climate to improve students' academic outcomes and well-being.

Keywords: Bullying, academic performance, student engagement, classroom participation, boarding schools, secondary education, Murree



INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a significant concern in educational settings, particularly in private secondary boarding schools where students live in close proximity and interact continuously. It is commonly defined as repeated aggressive behavior involving a power imbalance, including physical, verbal, and relational forms. In boarding schools, the absence of immediate parental support and prolonged peer exposure increases students' vulnerability to bullying. Research indicates that such environments may intensify both the occurrence and impact of bullying, making it a critical factor influencing students' academic experiences and outcomes (Olweus, 1993; Smith & Brain, 2000).

The impact of bullying on academic performance is widely documented in educational research. Victims of bullying often experience difficulties in concentration, reduced classroom participation, and lower academic achievement. These students may struggle to focus on learning tasks due to fear, anxiety, and ongoing psychological distress. Studies have consistently found that bullied students tend to achieve lower grades and perform poorly in examinations compared to their non-bullied peers (Juvonen, Wang, & Espinoza, 2011; Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010). In addition to direct academic effects, bullying also contributes to increased absenteeism and reduced school engagement. Students who are frequently bullied may avoid attending school to escape negative experiences, leading to disruptions in learning continuity. This avoidance behavior can eventually result in chronic absenteeism or even school dropout. Research highlights that a hostile school environment significantly diminishes students' sense of safety and belonging, which are essential for sustained academic participation (Cornell, Gregory, Huang, & Fan, 2013; Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivara, & Kernic, 2005).

Psychological factors play a mediating role in the relationship between bullying and academic performance. Victims often develop anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, which impair cognitive functioning and academic motivation. In boarding school settings, these effects may be more pronounced due to limited emotional support systems. Studies suggest that decreased school belongingness and emotional well-being significantly reduce students' motivation to engage in academic activities, thereby negatively affecting their performance (Arseneault, 2018; Wentzel, 1998). Overall, bullying in private secondary boarding schools in Murree can have profound negative consequences on students' academic performance through both direct and indirect mechanisms. It not only hinders cognitive engagement and classroom participation but also affects psychological well-being and school adjustment. Addressing bullying through effective school policies, counseling services, and supportive peer environments is essential to promote academic success and overall student development (Mahnaz, 2024).

Bullying in educational settings has emerged as a critical issue affecting students' psychological well-being, social adjustment, and academic success across the globe. In recent decades, increasing scholarly attention has been directed toward understanding the multifaceted consequences of bullying, particularly in structured environments such as boarding schools where students reside and interact continuously. Bullying is generally defined as repeated aggressive behavior characterized by an imbalance of power, where one or more individuals intentionally harm or distress another (Olweus, 1993). This phenomenon may manifest in various forms, including physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying, each exerting distinct yet interrelated effects on students' academic and emotional development (Smith et al., 2008). Within the context of private secondary



boarding schools in Murree, where students experience prolonged peer interaction and limited family contact, the dynamics of bullying may have profound implications for academic achievement, motivation, and overall educational outcomes (Mahnaz & Kiran, 2024a).

Academic achievement is widely recognized as a central indicator of educational success, reflecting students' cognitive development, learning outcomes, and preparedness for future academic and professional pursuits. However, academic performance is not solely determined by intellectual ability; it is significantly influenced by social and emotional factors within the school environment (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Among these factors, peer relationships play a crucial role in shaping students' academic trajectories. Positive peer interactions can enhance motivation, engagement, and achievement, whereas negative interactions, such as bullying, can disrupt learning processes and hinder academic progress (Wentzel, 2017). Consequently, examining the relationship between peer bullying and academic achievement is essential for understanding how adverse social experiences affect students in boarding school settings (Mahnaz & Kiran, 2024b).

The relationship between peer bullying and academic achievement has been extensively explored in educational research, with consistent evidence indicating a negative association between victimization and academic outcomes. Students who experience bullying often exhibit decreased concentration, lower classroom participation, and diminished academic performance (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010). This relationship is particularly significant in boarding schools, where the absence of immediate familial support may exacerbate the impact of peer victimization. In such environments, students are more reliant on peer networks for emotional and social support, making them more vulnerable to the adverse effects of bullying. Therefore, investigating the relationship between peer bullying and academic achievement among secondary-level boarding school students in Murree provides a contextually relevant understanding of how these dynamics operate in a localized educational setting.

Furthermore, the boarding school environment presents unique challenges and opportunities for addressing bullying and its academic consequences. Unlike day schools, boarding schools involve interaction among students, which can intensify both positive and negative peer dynamics. While this environment may increase the likelihood of bullying incidents, it also provides opportunities for fostering supportive peer relationships that can mitigate the negative effects of bullying. Peer support has been identified as a critical protective factor that can buffer the impact of bullying on students' academic and psychological well-being (Holt & Espelage, 2007). Supportive peers can provide emotional reassurance, practical assistance, and a sense of belonging, which can enhance students' resilience and promote positive academic outcomes despite adverse experiences (Mahnaz & Kiran, 2024c).

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the extent of bullying among students in private secondary boarding schools in Murree.
2. To investigate the impact of bullying on the academic performance of secondary school students.
3. To assess the effect of bullying on students' classroom participation and academic engagement.



Hypotheses of the Study

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between bullying and academic performance among students in private secondary boarding schools in Murree.

H₁₁: There is a significant relationship between bullying and academic performance among students in private secondary boarding schools in Murree.

H₀₂: Bullying has no significant effect on students' classroom participation and academic engagement.

H₁₂: Bullying has a significant effect on students' classroom participation and academic engagement.

Significance of the Study

This study holds substantial importance for educational stakeholders, particularly within the context of private secondary boarding schools in Murree. It provides empirical evidence regarding the impact of bullying on students' academic performance, thereby contributing to the existing body of knowledge in educational research. The findings of the study will assist school administrators and policymakers in understanding the severity of bullying and its academic consequences, enabling them to design effective anti-bullying policies and intervention strategies. Furthermore, the study is significant for teachers and counselors, as it highlights the need to identify and support students who are victims of bullying. By understanding the relationship between bullying and academic outcomes, educators can adopt appropriate classroom management techniques and provide psychological support to enhance students' academic engagement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bullying in Educational Settings

Bullying has been widely recognized as a critical issue affecting students' academic and psychosocial development across educational settings. It is defined as repeated aggressive behavior characterized by an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim (Olweus, 1993). In school environments, bullying may take physical, verbal, or relational forms, each contributing differently to students' academic experiences. Research over the past two decades has emphasized that bullying is not only a behavioral concern but also an educational problem due to its strong association with reduced academic performance and engagement (Smith & Brain, 2000).

Bullying and Academic Achievement

A substantial body of empirical research has established a negative relationship between bullying and academic achievement. Victimized students often exhibit lower grades, decreased academic motivation, and poor performance in standardized assessments. A meta-analytic study by Nakamoto and Schwartz (2010) concluded that peer victimization is significantly associated with lower academic achievement across different age groups. Similarly, Juvonen et al. (2011) found that students who experience frequent bullying demonstrate declining academic performance over time due to impaired concentration and increased emotional distress (Mahnaz et al., 2025a).

Bullying and Student Engagement

The literature also highlights the role of bullying in reducing students' engagement and participation in academic activities. Victims tend to withdraw from classroom interactions, avoid group work, and limit communication with teachers due to fear of embarrassment or further victimization. This reduced participation negatively affects learning outcomes and skill development. According to Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), student



engagement is a crucial predictor of academic success, and any factor such as bullying that diminishes engagement can significantly hinder academic progress (Mahnaz et al., 2025b).

Psychological Effects of Bullying on Academic Performance

Another important dimension explored in the literature is the impact of bullying on students' psychological well-being, which in turn affects academic performance. Victims of bullying are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, all of which impair cognitive functioning and learning capacity. Arseneault (2018) reported that the long-term psychological effects of bullying extend into adolescence and adulthood, influencing both educational attainment and mental health outcomes. Wentzel (1998) further emphasized that emotional stability and positive peer relationships are essential for maintaining academic motivation and success.

Bullying in Boarding School Contexts

In boarding school contexts, the impact of bullying is often intensified due to continuous peer interaction and limited external support systems. Students living in residential settings may find it difficult to escape bullying, leading to prolonged exposure and more severe consequences. Research indicates that such environments can exacerbate feelings of isolation and helplessness among victims, thereby further reducing their academic performance and school adjustment (Glew et al., 2005). Consequently, addressing bullying in boarding schools is essential for fostering a safe and supportive learning environment.

Relationship between Peer Bullying and Academic Achievement

A substantial body of empirical literature has established a negative relationship between peer bullying and academic achievement. Victims of bullying often experience anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, which impair their ability to concentrate and perform academically (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010). A meta-analysis conducted by Nakamoto and Schwartz (2010) revealed that peer victimization is significantly associated with lower academic achievement across diverse educational contexts.

Similarly, Juvonen, Wang, and Espinoza (2011) found that students who experience bullying are more likely to report decreased classroom engagement and lower grade point averages. The psychological distress caused by bullying disrupts cognitive processes such as attention and memory, which are essential for effective learning. Furthermore, bullied students often avoid school environments to escape victimization, leading to increased absenteeism and reduced instructional time (Mahnaz et al., 2025c).

In the context of secondary education, the relationship between bullying and academic achievement becomes particularly critical. Adolescence is a developmental stage marked by heightened sensitivity to peer evaluation and social acceptance. As a result, bullying experiences during this period can have profound effects on students' academic trajectories. Studies conducted in South Asian contexts also indicate that bullying is a significant predictor of poor academic outcomes, highlighting its relevance in regions such as Pakistan (Khan et al., 2019).

In boarding schools, the impact of peer bullying on academic achievement may be even more pronounced due to the continuous nature of peer interactions. Without adequate supervision and intervention, bullying behaviors can persist and intensify, leading to sustained academic decline.

Impact of Bullying on Academic Performance in Private Boarding Schools

Academic performance encompasses a broader range of indicators than academic achievement, including behavioral aspects such as participation, persistence, and



attendance. Bullying negatively affects all these dimensions, leading to overall declines in academic performance. Glew et al. (2005) found that students involved in bullying, whether as victims or perpetrators, are more likely to exhibit poor academic performance and behavioral problems. Victimized students often experience difficulties in concentrating, completing assignments, and participating in classroom activities. These challenges are compounded by emotional distress, which further hinders academic functioning.

Private boarding schools, which often emphasize academic excellence and discipline, are not immune to bullying. In fact, the structured and competitive nature of these institutions may contribute to the emergence of bullying behaviors. Hong and Espelage (2012) noted that school environments with high academic pressure may inadvertently foster aggression and peer victimization. The impact of bullying on academic performance is also mediated by mental health outcomes. Studies have shown that bullying is associated with increased levels of anxiety, depression, and stress, all of which negatively affect academic performance (Arseneault, 2018). These psychological factors interfere with students' ability to engage effectively in learning activities, resulting in lower academic outcomes (Mahnaz et al., 2023).

In the specific context of private secondary boarding schools in Murree, the interplay between academic expectations and peer dynamics creates a unique setting for examining the impact of bullying on academic performance. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing targeted interventions.

Overall, the reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that bullying has a significant negative impact on academic performance through direct effects on learning and indirect effects mediated by psychological and behavioral factors. These findings underscore the need for comprehensive interventions aimed at reducing bullying and promoting students' academic and emotional well-being.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used a mixed methods design that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. Statistical and anecdotal testimonies from those who have been bullied, this approach allowed for more understanding of the relationship between bullying and academic achievement in the long term. The study employed a descriptive survey design to explore the relationship between academic performance and bullying. The design allowed the collection of data from a vast population, providing statistical data as well as including personal experiences to give a deeper contextual understanding.

Research Philosophy

The present study is grounded in the positivist research philosophy, which emphasizes objectivity, empirical observation, and the use of quantitative methods to examine relationships among variables. This philosophy is appropriate as the study seeks to investigate measurable constructs such as peer bullying, academic achievement, academic motivation, and peer support within private secondary boarding schools in Murree. It assumes an objectivist ontological stance, where reality is independent and can be observed through standardized instruments, and adopts a deductive epistemological approach by formulating hypotheses based on existing theories and testing them through statistical analysis. The use of structured questionnaires and quantitative techniques ensures reliability, validity, and generalizability of findings, while maintaining value



neutrality by minimizing researcher bias. Thus, the positivist paradigm provides a systematic and scientific foundation for analyzing the effects of bullying on students' academic outcomes.

Population

The population is the entire group of individuals, occurrences, or elements from which a sample is drawn to gather data. According to Kombo (2001), a group should share at least one characteristic that justifies their inclusion in the study. Conversely, a sample is a subset of this population; it is a smaller group selected for additional research, allowing the researcher to make inferences about the larger population. The study's participants included secondary private boarding school students, both day and boarding, as well as teachers and administrators responsible for monitoring student conduct and implementing anti-bullying policies. This diverse group was selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the prevalence, repercussions, and management of bullying in the context of boarding schools.

Table 1: *Total Private Secondary Boarding Schools & Population in Tehsil & District Murree*

Demographics	Schools	Population
Boys	10	2554
Girls	5	956
Total	15	3510

The table presents the demographic distribution of the population across selected boarding schools. A total of 15 schools were included in the study, comprising 10 boys' schools and 5 girls' schools. The overall population consists of 3,510 students, with 2,554 boys and 956 girls. The data indicate that boys' schools represent a larger proportion of both the number of institutions and student population. This distribution provides a comprehensive basis for analyzing gender-based differences in the study variables.

Sampling Technique:

Selecting a subset of people from a broader community to accurately reflect its features is known as sampling, and it is a crucial part of research. Sampling, according to Gay (2009), is the process of selecting a collection of objects, people, occasions, or components that best reflect the characteristics of the larger group from which the sample is taken. By using this method, researchers can extrapolate results from a more manageable, smaller group to the whole population.

The population was divided into two primary categories for this study:

1. **Boarding students in private secondary schools**
2. **Day students in private secondary schools**

This method was selected in order to provide a more thorough knowledge of bullying in District Murree's private secondary boarding schools and to capture the varied perspectives of students in various living situations. Stratified random sampling was subsequently used to choose the sample, guaranteeing that every stratum was fairly represented and boosting the validity and dependability of the research's conclusions. Middle and high school students aged 12-18 years comprised the target population. To accommodate various groups such as gender, grade level, and school type, stratified random sampling was utilized.

Sample Size

For the larger population size, the percentage of the population required is smaller to get a representative sample. If the population size is around 5000, a sample size of 400 will be



adequate, but it is considered more accurate and confident with a sample of 500 (Gay, 2009). About 10% sample size was selected by the proportional stratified random sampling technique. A total of 200 students and 200 teachers were selected from five different boarding schools.

Following is the list of Boarding schools selected for the study:

Table2: Sample Size for the Study

S.No	School	No. of Males	No. of Females	Total Students	Teachers	Councilors	Heads
1	Boarding School Murree (For Girls)	0	50	50	50	5	1
2	College, Murree (For Boys)	50	0	50	30	5	1
3	College, Murree (For Boys)	50	0	50	40	5	1
4	Girls Boarding School, Murree (For Girls)	0	50	50	50	5	1
5	College Murree (For Boys)	50	0	50	30	5	1

The table presents institutional-level demographic and staffing information of the selected schools in Murree. It includes five institutions comprising both boys' and girls' boarding schools, each with a total of 50 students, resulting in an overall sample of 250 students. The gender distribution is segregated by institution, with boys' schools enrolling only male students and girls' schools enrolling only female students. The number of teachers varies across institutions, ranging from 30 to 50, while each school is supported by 5 counselors and 1 head. This distribution reflects a balanced representation of institutions and provides a structured basis for examining the study variables across different school settings.

Research Tool: (Instruments of the Study)

A self-designed questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument. Surveys are effective tools for collecting detailed information from individuals due to their structured format and ease of response, particularly with a Likert scale (Rafiq, 2011). According to Neve et al. (2003), surveys are invaluable for understanding individuals' perspectives or attitudes toward specific issues. The questionnaire consisted of 50 closed-ended questions across four components, designed on a five-point Likert scale:

1. Part 1: Demographic Information
2. Part 2: Data Collection from Students for Objectives 1 and 2
3. Part 3: Data Collection from Teachers for Objective 3
4. Part 4: Data Collection from Administrators for Objective 3



Data Collection Methods

The study employed semi-structured interviews and questionnaires to collect data. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and open-ended questions to gather quantitative data on students' academic performance and bullying experiences. A small sample of students, teachers, and school counselors took part in semi-structured interviews to gather qualitative data regarding the psychological and academic effects of bullying.

Pilot Testing

Pilot testing was conducted to assess the time required for respondents to complete the questionnaire and ensure its clarity and effectiveness. This process evaluated the reliability (consistency of results) and validity (accuracy of measurement) of the instrument, both of which are critical for its suitability (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). Thirty participants were selected for the pilot test from among the instructors and pupils at the private secondary boarding schools in Murree. Pilot testing helped identify unclear questions, revise the phrasing, and change the questionnaire's structure to ensure it was comprehensive and user-friendly.

Validity of Research Tool

The initial draft of the questionnaire was developed using insights from prior studies on bullying and academic performance. To ensure validity, the draft was reviewed by the supervisor at Alhamd Islamic University, and feedback was sought from two educational research experts. The first expert provided feedback via email, while the other expert provided comments during a face-to-face meeting. In response to their suggestions, the questionnaire was revised, rewording any unclear questions and making any necessary adjustments. The final version's Cronbach's alpha reliability score of 0.82 demonstrated strong dependability (Johnson & Christensen, 2020).

Reliability of Research Tool

The questionnaire was well-organized and included a cover page detailing the study's objectives. It was translated into Urdu so that all responders could access it. A 30-person pilot test confirmed its reliability with a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.82, which is excellent for social science research (Smith & Brown, 2021). The questionnaire's exceptional reliability allowed it to consistently assess the effect of bullying on academic performance.

Data Collection Procedure

The self-designed questionnaire was the primary instrument, a method widely recognized for its ability to collect detailed data from large populations (Smith & Brown, 2021). It contained 50 closed-ended questions in four sections, each on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was distributed to students, teachers, and administrators from five private secondary boarding schools in Murree. Each school was visited in person to hand out paper copies of the survey and a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study. The 100% response rate achieved proved that the in-person administration strategy was successful. The data was prepared for analysis by entering it into statistical software after being reviewed for errors.

Data Analysis

SPSS version 27 was chosen to analyze the data from 300 respondents because it can handle both quantitative and qualitative data. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were used to summarize the data, and Cronbach's alpha (0.82) was used to evaluate the questionnaire's reliability. Correlation analysis and other inferential statistical techniques



were used to examine the connection between academic achievement and bullying. The use of thematic analysis to qualitative responses allowed for a better understanding of the experiences of teachers and students with bullying in boarding schools.

DATA ANALYSIS

Demographics

Based on Gender

Table: *Students' Demographics based on Gender*

Gender	Frequency	%	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. deviation
Male	100	50 %				
Female	100	50 %	2	2	1	1
Total	200	100%				

The sample consists of an equal distribution of gender, with 100 male respondents (50%) and 100 female respondents (50%), making a total of 200 participants.

- The mean gender value is 2, with a median of 2 and a mode of 1, suggesting a coded classification where 1 = Male and 2 = Female.
- The standard deviation is 1, indicating a wide spread between the two categories, which is expected in a perfectly balanced distribution.

Based on Education

Table: *Students' Demographics based on Education*

Level	Frequency	%	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. deviation
Secondary	99	49.0%				
Higher Secondary	101	51.0%	1.51	2.00	2.00	.50
Total	200	100%				

The data reflects that 99 respondents (49%) have attained Secondary education, while 101 respondents (51%) have attained Higher Secondary education, out of the same total of 200 participants.

- The mean educational level is 1.51, indicating that the majority slightly leans toward Higher Secondary.
- The median and mode are both 2, suggesting that Higher Secondary is the most frequently occurring and central level of education among respondents.
- The standard deviation of 0.50 reflects a relatively small variation between the two education levels, indicating consistency within the demographic group.

How often have you observed or experienced bullying that reinforces traditional gender roles (e.g., mocking boys for being "too emotional" or girls for being "too assertive")?

Table: *Frequency of Bullying Reinforcing Traditional Gender Roles*

Answer Scale	Frequency	%	Mean	Median	Mode	Std.dev
Never	11	5.5				
Rarely	45	22.5				
Sometimes	90	45.0	2.9850	3.0000	3.00	.93227
Often	44	22.0				
Always	10	5.0				
Total	200	100				

Bullying that reinforces traditional gender roles is widespread, with 45.0% of students reporting it "Sometimes," 22.0% "Often," and 5.0% "Always," totaling 72.0% who experience this regularly. The mean of 2.99 (just below "Sometimes") and median and



mode of 3.00 ("Sometimes") indicate that this issue occurs with moderate frequency. The standard deviation of 0.93 suggests relatively low variability, meaning most students share similar experiences of occasional gender-based bullying. Only 5.5% report "Never" encountering this, underscoring its prevalence and potential to harm emotional well-being by enforcing restrictive gender norms, calling for educational programs to promote gender equity.

How often have you observed or experienced physical harassment (e.g., unwanted touching, pushing, or intimidation) specifically targeting students of a particular gender?

Table: *Frequency of Physical Harassment Targeting Students Based on Gender*

Answer Scale	Frequency	%	Mean	Median	Mode	Std.dev
Never	15	7.5				
Rarely	54	27.0				
Sometimes	67	33.5	2.9550	3.0000	3.00	1.02872
Often	53	26.5				
Always	11	5.5				
Total	200	100				

Physical harassment targeting students based on gender is a significant concern, with 33.5% of students reporting it "Sometimes," 26.5% "Often," and 5.5% "Always," totaling 65.5% who experience this regularly. The mean of 2.96 (just below "Sometimes") and median and mode of 3.00 ("Sometimes") suggest that this issue occurs with moderate frequency. The standard deviation of 1.03 indicates moderate variability, reflecting diverse experiences but a general trend toward occasional harassment. Only 7.5% report "Never" experiencing this, highlighting a pervasive safety issue that can severely impact emotional well-being and learning, requiring immediate action to ensure a safe school environment.

How often have you observed or experienced gender-specific verbal abuse (e.g., sexist remarks, derogatory slurs, or name-calling)?

Table: *Frequency of Gender-Specific Verbal Abuse*

Answer Scale	Frequency	%	Mean	Median	Mode	Std.dev
Never	17	8.5				
Rarely	46	23.0				
Sometimes	81	40.5	2.9500	3.0000	3.00	1.03093
Often	42	21.0				
Always	14	7.0				
Total	200	100				

Gender-specific verbal abuse is a common issue, with 40.5% of students reporting it "Sometimes," 21.0% "Often," and 7.0% "Always," totaling 68.5% who experience this regularly. The mean of 2.95 (just below "Sometimes") and median and mode of 3.00 ("Sometimes") indicate that this form of abuse occurs with moderate frequency. The standard deviation of 1.03 suggests moderate variability, meaning experiences vary but generally lean toward occasional verbal abuse. Only 8.5% report "Never" encountering this, emphasizing its prevalence and potential to harm students' emotional well-being, necessitating stronger policies to address sexist language in schools.



How often have you observed or experienced cyberbullying behaviors (e.g., spreading rumors, sharing inappropriate images) specifically targeted at students because of their gender?

Table: *Frequency of Gender-Specific Cyberbullying*

Answer Scale	Frequency	%	Mean	Median	Mode	Std.dev
Never	16	8.0				
Rarely	46	23.0				
Sometimes	72	36.0	3.0250	3.0000	3.00	1.06774
Often	49	24.5				
Always	17	8.5				
Total	200	100				

Cyberbullying targeting students based on gender is prevalent, with 36.0% of students reporting it "Sometimes," 24.5% "Often," and 8.5% "Always," totaling 69.0% who experience this regularly. The mean of 3.03 (just above "Sometimes") and median and mode of 3.00 ("Sometimes") suggest that this issue occurs with moderate frequency. The standard deviation of 1.07 indicates moderate variability, reflecting diverse experiences but a general trend toward occasional cyberbullying. Only 8.0% report "Never" encountering this, highlighting its widespread impact on emotional well-being in the digital space, calling for robust online safety measures in schools.

Table: *Extent of Bullying among Students in Private Secondary Boarding Schools in Murree (Objective 1, N = 200)*

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
High	80	40%
Moderate	70	35%
Low	50	25%
Total	200	100%

The table shows that 40% of students experience a high level of bullying, while 35% fall in the moderate category. A smaller proportion (25%) reported low exposure, indicating that bullying is a common issue among students in boarding schools. The findings suggest that the residential environment may increase peer interaction, thereby raising the likelihood of bullying incidents. Overall, the data reflects that a significant number of students are exposed to bullying in the selected institutions.

Table: *Impact of Bullying on Academic Performance (Objective 2, N = 200)*

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Strong Negative Impact	90	45%
Moderate Impact	60	30%
No Impact	50	25%
Total	200	100%

The results indicate that 45% of students perceive bullying as having a strong negative impact on their academic performance, while 30% reported a moderate effect. Only 25% indicated no impact, demonstrating that the majority of students are academically affected by bullying. The findings suggest that bullying interferes with students' concentration, learning, and examination outcomes. This highlights the negative role of bullying in shaping academic achievement.



Table 3: Effect of Bullying on Classroom Participation and Academic Engagement (Objective 3, N = 200)

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Highly Affected	100	50%
Moderately Affected	60	30%
Not Affected	40	20%
Total	200	100%

The table reveals that 50% of students reported that bullying highly affects their classroom participation and engagement, while 30% experienced moderate effects. Only 20% indicated no impact, suggesting that most students face challenges in academic involvement due to bullying. The findings imply that fear and insecurity lead to reduced participation in classroom activities. Consequently, this negatively influences students' overall academic engagement and learning outcomes.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the first objective revealed that a large proportion of students experience high to moderate levels of bullying in private secondary boarding schools in Murree. This result is consistent with previous studies which indicate that bullying is prevalent in school environments, particularly in residential settings where peer interaction is continuous. For instance, Olweus (1993) identified bullying as a widespread issue affecting a significant number of students across school systems. Similarly, Smith and Brain (2000) reported that bullying remains a persistent problem despite increased awareness and interventions. Moreover, a study by Due et al. (2005) found that a considerable percentage of adolescents across different countries reported frequent exposure to bullying, highlighting its global prevalence. These findings support the current study, confirming that bullying is a common phenomenon in boarding school contexts.

The results of the second objective indicated that bullying has a strong negative impact on students' academic performance. This finding aligns with the work of Nakamoto and Schwartz (2010), who concluded through a meta-analysis that peer victimization significantly lowers academic achievement. Likewise, Juvonen et al. (2011) found that students who experience bullying show a decline in grades and academic outcomes over time. In addition, Glew et al. (2005) reported that bullied students are more likely to have lower academic performance due to psychosocial maladjustment. These studies collectively reinforce the present findings, demonstrating that bullying adversely affects students' academic success through both cognitive and emotional disruptions.

The third objective revealed that bullying significantly affects students' classroom participation and academic engagement. This finding is supported by Fredricks et al. (2004), who emphasized that student engagement is a key determinant of academic success and is negatively influenced by adverse social experiences such as bullying. Similarly, Wentzel (1998) found that positive peer relationships are essential for active participation in academic settings, while negative interactions lead to withdrawal and disengagement. Furthermore, Cornell et al. (2013) reported that bullying contributes to school avoidance and reduced classroom involvement, ultimately affecting students' academic progress. These findings are in agreement with the current study, indicating that bullying diminishes students' willingness to participate in academic activities and undermines their engagement in learning.



FINDINGS

1. A majority of students experience moderate to high levels of bullying in boarding schools.
2. Bullying has a significant negative impact on students' academic performance.
3. Bullying adversely affects students' classroom participation and academic engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Schools should implement comprehensive anti-bullying policies and monitoring systems to reduce bullying prevalence.
2. Counseling and academic support programs should be provided to minimize the negative impact of bullying on students' performance.
3. Teachers should adopt inclusive classroom strategies to enhance participation and engagement among bullied students.

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