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The persistent impact of being bullied during childhood and adolescence: Implications of policy and practice

L. ARSENEAULT¹

¹King's College London, Institute of Psychiatry- Psychology and Neuroscience, London, United Kingdom

Learning Objectives

To learn about the implications for policy and practice of research on the pervasive and long term impact of childhood bullying victimization.

Description

This presentation aims to provide a review of the evidence for an independent contribution of childhood bullying victimisation to the development of poor outcomes throughout the life span, and discuss the implications for policy and practice. Three sets of evidence will be presented and discussed: (1) being bullied in childhood is associated with distress and symptoms of mental health problems; (2) the consequences of childhood bullying victimisation can persist up to midlife and, in addition to mental health, can impact physical and socioeconomic outcomes; and (3) some factors can predispose children to be targeted by bullying behaviours. While considerable efforts are in place to reduce bullying behaviours and limit its impact on the victims, efforts and funds should also be invested in interventions focused on limiting distress and adjustment difficulties among young victims and possibly by the same token, preventing long-lasting problems in later life. Further work is needed to understand why and how young people's aspirations are often cut short by this all too common adverse social experience. In parallel, we must develop effective strategies to tackle this form of abuse and its consequences for the victims. Addressing bullying in childhood could not only reduce children's and adolescents' mental health symptoms but also prevent psychiatric and socioeconomic difficulties up to adulthood and reduce considerable costs for society.