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Impact of Bullying on Emotional Intelligence and Self Esteem among Secondary School Students

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Abstract

The present study aimed to examine the impact of bullying behaviors on emotional intelligence and self-esteem among secondary school students in Bahawalpur, Pakistan. A quantitative correlational research design was employed, involving a sample of 160 students (75 females, 85 males) aged 13 to 18 years, recruited from public and private secondary schools using a nonprobability sampling technique. Data were gathered using instruments that are frequently utilized and validated within the Pakistani context: the Bulling Participant Questionnaire to assess bullying roles, The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test for emotional intelligence, and the Urdu-translated version of Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) for self-esteem. Results revealed significant interrelations among the key variables. Bullying behavior was positively associated with the assistant role and negatively with victimization and defending roles. Emotional intelligence and self-esteem were negatively correlated with bullying behavior but positively correlated with defending behavior. Interestingly, victimization showed a weak but significant positive correlation with both emotional intelligence and self-esteem, possibly indicating the development of resilience or coping strategies among some victims. Regression analysis further indicated that bullying behavior negatively predicted emotional intelligence and self-esteem, whereas defending and victim roles positively

Keywords: Bullying, Emotional Intelligence, Self Esteem, School Students

Introduction

Bullying is described as the recurrent and purposeful exhibition of aggressive behavior under varied settings, typified by a noticeable power imbalance between those involved (Jeffrey & Stuart, 2020). Bullying frequently happens when an individual or group engages in negative behaviors, including verbal, physical, or interpersonal acts, aiming at causing damage, instilling fear, and establishing power over others (Williams & Guerra, 2011). Emotional intelligence denotes the ability to identify, manage, and affect both own and others' emotions (Gebler et al., 2021). Emotional intelligence profoundly impacts relationship development, especially in a school environment where children face many barriers in achieving mutual understanding (Pellerone et al., 2023). Self-esteem has been a popular issue in psychology for many years. Freud, who is regarded as one of the founding fathers of psychology, developed theories regarding self-esteem that are central to his work (Ackerman, 2020). Self-esteem often refers to a person's general perception of their own value or worth. According to Adler and Stewart (2004), it's a metric that indicates how much a person regards, approves of, or appreciates them.

Problem Statement

Bullying is a growing concern in Pakistani secondary schools, impacting students' emotional well-being and academic performance. Despite its prevalence, limited research explores its effects on emotional intelligence and self-esteem, which are crucial for students' psychological resilience. Bullying can lower self-awareness, emotional regulation, and confidence, leading to long-term psychological distress. Therefore, the present study investigated how bullying affects emotional intelligence and self-esteem among secondary school students in Pakistan. The findings will help educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals develop effective interventions to foster a safer school environment and promote students' wellbeing.

Rationale of the Study

Bullying is a widespread issue in Pakistani secondary schools, yet its psychological consequences remain underexplored. Emotional intelligence and self-esteem play a crucial role in students' mental well-being, academic success, and social interactions. However, exposure to bullying can diminish these qualities, leading to emotional distress, low self-confidence, and difficulties in interpersonal relationships. Given the lack of empirical research on this issue in Pakistan, this study is essential to understand how bullying affects students' emotional intelligence and self-esteem. The findings will provide valuable insights for educators, psychologists, and policymakers to develop effective intervention programs, promote emotional resilience, and create a safer school environment. This research will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on bullying and its impact, guiding efforts to enhance students' psychological well-being and academic success.

Objectives

1. To examine the correlation between bullying factors (bully, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider), emotional intelligence, and self-esteem among secondary school students.
2. To determine the extent to which bullying factors predict the emotional intelligence of secondary school students.
3. To assess whether bullying factors significantly predict the self-esteem of secondary school students.
4. To compare bullying factors, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem across gender (boys and girls).
5. To investigate differences in bullying factors, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem among students from different demographic variables

Hypotheses

H1. Bullying factors (bully, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider), emotional intelligence, and self-esteem are significantly correlated

H2. Bullying factors (bully, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider) significantly predict the emotional intelligence of secondary students

H3. Bullying factors (bully, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider) significantly predict the self-esteem of secondary students

H4. Bullying factors (bully, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider), emotional intelligence, and self-esteem of secondary students are significantly different among girls and boys.

H5. Bullying factors (bully, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider), emotional intelligence, and self-esteem are significantly different among students of different social status.

H6. Bullying factors (bully, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider), emotional intelligence, and self-esteem are significantly different among private and government students.

H7. Bullying factors (bully, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider), emotional intelligence, and self-esteem are significantly different among different family structures.

H8. Bullying factors (bully, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider), emotional intelligence, and self-esteem are significantly different among students of different grade levels.

Literature Review

The influence of bullying on emotional intelligence and self-esteem in secondary school students in Pakistan is considerable, as demonstrated by multiple studies. Bullying behaviors, encompassing verbal and physical abuse, result in diminished self-esteem and emotional distress, thereby impairing students' academic performance and social interactions. One study investigated the prevalence and predictive relationship of bullying and victimization among Pakistani adolescents, revealing significant associations with emotional and behavioral problems and underscoring the necessity for targeted anti-bullying policies and support systems. The findings indicated a higher prevalence of behavioral problems in boys compared to girls. The findings suggest that bullying is a predictor of conduct problems, while victimization is associated with emotional issues (Nawaz & Mushtaq, 2024). A recent study conducted in Pakistan employed a cross-sectional and quantitative research design to evaluate the impact of bullying behavior on adolescents' self-esteem and academic achievements from a gender perspective. The findings indicated a significant difference between female and male adolescents concerning traditional bullying. The finding highlighted the Traditional bullying significantly affects self-esteem and academic performance. In contrast, female students express more pronounced views on traditional bullying as compared to male (Parveen et al., 2023).

Methodology

Research Design

In present study quantitative correlational research design was employed to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and bullying among Pakistani high school students. This research design employed quantitative data through structured questionnaires and statistical procedures was used assess the correlation among the study variables. This study aimed to utilize this approach to present measurable and reliable findings regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence, self-esteem, bullying behavior tendencies, and the capacity for bullying behavior among high school students in Pakistan.

Target Population /Sampling

The research concentrated on a sample population of male and female high school pupils. The adequate sample size was determined through power analysis as described by Faul et al. (2007), employing the G*Power (3.1) model. The formula includes an effect size of 0.15, a significance level of 0.05, and a power value of 0.95. The minimum requisite sample size was determined to be 141 utilizing the power formula with the designated parameters. The survey was conducted in the students of Private and Government Secondary Schools of Bahawalpur Punjab Province, Pakistan, utilizing a non-probability sampling technique, with students selected from high schools. A total of 193 secondary school pupils engaged in the survey, with 160 questionnaires completed properly and 33 remaining incomplete. As a result, the questionnaires inadequately completed by the students were omitted from the study. Out of 160 students, 75 were females and 85 were boys, all aged between 13 and 18 years. The research team initially convened with students' parents and school officials to elucidate the study's objectives and emphasize the importance of data confidentiality. A researcher from the team conducted surveys at the designated educational institution following a predetermined schedule after securing necessary approvals. The assessments were performed in the classroom of each student group, in the presence of their instructor.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Students enrolled in secondary schools (Grades 8 to 10) within Bahawalpur, Pakistan were chosen as participants of this study.
2. Participants aged between 13 and 18 years were included.
3. Both male and female students were considered as a subject.
4. Students who provided informed consent (and assent, where applicable), along with parental consent for minors were included.

5 Students able to read and understand Urdu language version of the questionnaire were administered.

Exclusion Criteria

1 Students with a diagnosed psychological disorder (e.g., clinical depression, anxiety, as reported by school records or teachers were excluded.
2 Students who were absent during data collection or did not complete the questionnaires fully were automatically excluded.
3 Students enrolled in special education programs or with significant cognitive impairments, making it difficult for them to respond to self-report measures reliably were excluded**.**

Measures

Demographic variables

Gender, Socioeconomic Status, School type, Family structure and Grades were the demographic variables of this study.

Informed Consent

In this study a written consent was provided to the guardian whose children were below 18 years. Through this consent parents were informed about the nature of study with detailed information so that they may decide to allow their children for voluntarily participation.

Bullying Participant Behaviors Questionnaire (BPBQ)

The Bullying Participant Behaviors Questionnaire (BPBQ) was used to assess students' involvement in various bullying roles over the past 30 days (Demaray & Malecki, 2003). The scale consists of 50 items divided into five subscales: Bullying Behaviors (10 items), Assisting Behaviors (10 items), Victimization (10 items), Defending Behaviors (10 items), and Outsider Behaviors (10 items). Participants responded using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *Never (1)* to *7 or More Times (5)*. Higher scores in each subscale indicate greater engagement in that specific bullying role. The scale has been used internationally and adapted in school-based research settings in Pakistan with acceptable reliability.

Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT)

The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT), developed by Schutte et al. (1998), was used to measure emotional intelligence. This self-report inventory consists of 33 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree (1)* to *Strongly Agree (5)*. The scale assesses various dimensions of emotional intelligence, including the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and manage emotions. In Pakistani contexts, the SSEIT has shown good internal consistency and has been previously used in adolescent samples. Items marked with an asterisk are reverse-scored.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), originally developed by Rosenberg (1965), was used to measure participants' global self-worth. The scale includes 10 items, with responses recorded on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree (1)* to *Strongly Agree (4)*. Items 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9 are reverse-scored. A higher total score indicates higher self-esteem. The Urdu-translated version of the RSES, which has been widely used and validated in Pakistan, was administered in this study to ensure linguistic and cultural appropriateness.

Procedure

This study was performed at secondary schools in Bahawalpur, with a sample of 160 pupils chosen by G*Power analysis to ascertain the suitable sample size. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure a balanced representation of students from different school types (private and government) and grade levels. Prior to data collection, formal approval was requested from the school administrations to conduct the study within their institutions. Due to the presence of numerous participants under the age of 18, ethical considerations were meticulously adhered to. Parental consent was secured by disseminating consent forms to parents or legal guardians, detailing the study's objectives, methodology, potential risks, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Additionally, student agreement was gathered before participation to guarantee that students actively agreed to take part. They were notified that they could exit the

study at any moment without incurring any repercussions. Data collection occurred during school hours in a specified classroom environment to reduce distractions and maintain a uniform procedure. The researcher elucidated the study's objective, offered explicit instructions, and responded to enquiries prior to disseminating the questionnaire. Participants were given a structured self-report questionnaire comprising of standardized scores evaluating bullying roles, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem. The questionnaire was designed to be simple, age-appropriate, and non-intrusive, ensuring that students could complete it without discomfort. To preserve confidentiality, participants were directed to refrain from including their names or any identifying details on the questionnaire. The researcher monitored the session to ensure a quiet and focused environment while avoiding any undue influence on responses. Participants were provided ample time to complete the questionnaire independently, ensuring that replies truly reflected their opinions and experiences. Once completed, the questionnaires were collected and securely stored for data analysis.

Results

Table 1 *Frequency Distribution of Demographic Variables (N = 160)*

Variable	Category	*n*	*%*
Gender	Girl	75	46.9
	Boy	85	53.1
SES	Low	54	33.8
	Middle	65	40.6
	High	41	25.6
School Type	Private	101	63.1
	Public	59	36.9
Family Structure	Guardian Care	74	46.3
	Joint	55	34.4
	Nuclear	27	16.9
	Single-Parent	4	2.5
Grade	6th	21	13.1
	7th	39	24.4
	8th	16	10.0
	9th	27	16.9
	10^{th}	57	35.6

Note. Age ranged from 12 to 18 years (M = 14, SD = 1.53).

In Table 4.1, the demographic characteristics of the sample (N = 160) indicate a fairly balanced distribution of gender, with boys (53.1%) slightly outnumbering girls (46.9%). The socioeconomic status (SES) of the participants is distributed across three levels, with the middleincome group (40.6%) being the most prevalent, followed by the low-income (33.8%) and highincome groups (25.6%). A larger proportion of students attend private schools (63.1%) compared to public schools (36.9%), which may reflect socioeconomic differences in access to education. In terms of family structure, nearly half of the participants (46.3%) live under guardian care, followed by those in joint family systems (34.4%). A smaller proportion resides in nuclear (16.9%) and single-parent households (2.5%). The distribution of students across grade levels reveals that the highest proportion are in the 10th grade (35.6%), with fewer students in the 6th (13.1%) and 8th grades (10.0%). The age range spans from 12 to 18 years, with a mean age of 14 years (SD = 1.53), indicating a predominantly mid-adolescent sample. These demographic patterns provide a foundation for examining the impact of bullying on emotional intelligence and self-esteem, as different demographic variables may influence students' experiences and coping mechanisms.

Table 2 *Reliability Analysis of Study Measures (N = 130)*

Scale	Range	Items	Cronbach's α	*M*	*SD*
Bully	10-50	10	.97	33.28	15.79
Assistant	10-50	10	.56	24.59	6.23
Victim	10-50	10	.75	32.03	5.64
Defender	10-50	10	.72	35.43	6.24
Outsider	10-50	10	.63	41.53	4.53
Emotional Intelligence	33-165	33	.90	115.23	21.08
Self-Esteem	10-50	10	.96	33.07	14.62

Note. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

The reliability analysis of study measures (Table 4.2) indicates varying levels of internal consistency for the scales used. The bullying scale demonstrates excellent reliability (α = .97), suggesting strong consistency in measuring bullying behaviors. Similarly, the self-esteem scale (α = .96) and the emotional intelligence scale (α = .90) exhibit high reliability, indicating that these measures effectively assess the intended psychological constructs. The victim scale (α = .75) and the defender scale (α = .72) show acceptable reliability, suggesting moderate internal consistency. However, the assistant scale (α = .56) and the outsider scale (α = .63) display relatively lower reliability, indicating potential issues with consistency in responses. These scales may require further refinement or consideration of specific item contributions. The mean scores reveal that participants report the highest engagement in outsider behaviors (M = 41.53, SD = 4.53), suggesting a tendency to remain neutral or uninvolved in bullying situations. The lowest mean score is observed for the assistant role (M = 24.59, SD = 6.23), implying that fewer students actively support the bullying. The mean emotional intelligence score (M = 115.23, SD = 21.08) suggests a moderate level of emotional awareness and regulation among students. The self-esteem measure (M = 33.07, SD = 14.62) aligns with expected variations in adolescent selfperceptions. These findings provide a foundation for further analysis of the relationships between bullying involvement, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem, allowing for a deeper understanding of their interconnected impact.

Table 3 *Means, Standard Deviations, and Interco relations among Study Variables (N = 160)*

		M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Bully	29.00	11.94	—						
2.	Assistant	29.34	10.96	.29**	—					
3.	Victim	27.98	11.10	-.95**	-.21**	—				
4.	Defender	25.06	10.26	-.98**	-.26**	.94**	—			
5.	Outsider	19.46	9.90	.08	.02	-.13	-.07	—		
6.	Emotional Intelligence	57.07	19.67	-.22**	.02	.19*	.21**	.06	—	
7.	Self-Esteem	37.21	12.69	-.17*	.10	.18*	.17*	-.04	.76**	—

Note. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

The correlation analysis presented in Table 4.3 examines the relationships among bullying factors, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem. The results provide partial support for H1, as several significant correlations are observed. Notably, bullying behavior is positively associated with assistant roles (r = .29, p < .01), indicating that students who engage in bullying are more likely to have peers who assist them. Conversely, bullying is strongly and negatively correlated with victimization (r = -.95, p < .01) and defending behavior (r = -.98, p < .01), suggesting that students who engage in bullying are less likely to be victims or defenders. The outsider role is not significantly correlated with bullying behaviors, indicating that neutrality in bullying situations is relatively independent of direct involvement in bullying or defending. Emotional intelligence is negatively correlated with bullying (r = -.22, p < .01) and positively associated with defending behavior (r = .21, p < .01), suggesting that higher emotional intelligence may reduce bullying

tendencies and promote pro-social interventions. A weak but significant positive correlation is observed between emotional intelligence and victimization ($r = .19$, $p < .05$), implying that emotionally aware students may still experience victimization, possibly due to heightened sensitivity to social interactions. Self-esteem shows a negative correlation with bullying ($r = -.17$, $p < .05$) and a positive association with defending ($r = .17$, $p < .05$) and victimization ($r = .18$, $p < .05$). This suggests that students with higher self-esteem are more likely to stand up for victims but may also report experiencing bullying themselves. The strongest correlation is observed between emotional intelligence and self-esteem ($r = .76$, $p < .01$), indicating that students with greater emotional awareness and regulation tend to have higher self-esteem.

Table 4 *Simple Linear Regression Analyses Predicting Emotional Intelligence*

Predictor	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*t*	*p*	R^2	*F*
Bully	-0.36	0.13	-.22	-2.78	.006	.05	7.73**
Assistant	0.04	0.14	.02	0.30	.762	.00	0.09
Victim	0.34	0.14	.19	2.47	.015	.04	6.08*
Defender	0.41	0.15	.21	2.72	.007	.05	7.42**
Outsider	0.12	0.16	.06	0.78	.435	.00	0.61

Note. Each row represents a separate simple linear regression model with Emotional Intelligence as the dependent variable.
*p < .05. ** p < .01.

The results of the simple linear regression analyses presented in Table 4.4 provide partial support for H2, as certain bullying factors significantly predict emotional intelligence, while others do not. The bullying role is a significant negative predictor of emotional intelligence ($B = -0.36$, $SE = 0.13$, $\beta = -.22$, $p = .006$), indicating that students who engage in bullying behaviors tend to have lower emotional intelligence. This model explains 5% of the variance in emotional intelligence ($R^2 = .05$, $F = 7.73$, $p < .01$), suggesting that while bullying behavior has a significant impact, additional factors contribute to variations in emotional intelligence. Victimization is a significant positive predictor of emotional intelligence ($B = 0.34$, $SE = 0.14$, $\beta = .19$, $p = .015$), explaining 4% of the variance ($R^2 = .04$, $F = 6.08$, $p < .05$). This suggests that students who experience victimization may develop higher emotional intelligence, possibly as a coping mechanism to navigate social stressors. Similarly, defending behavior is a significant positive predictor of emotional intelligence ($B = 0.41$, $SE = 0.15$, $\beta = .21$, $p = .007$), explaining 5% of the variance ($R^2 = .05$, $F = 7.42$, $p < .01$), implying that students who intervene to protect victims tend to possess higher emotional intelligence, likely due to their ability to recognize and regulate emotions in social situations. However, the assistant ($B = 0.04$, $SE = 0.14$, $\beta = .02$, $p = .762$) and outsider roles ($B = 0.12$, $SE = 0.16$, $\beta = .06$, $p = .435$) do not significantly predict emotional intelligence, as their models yield negligible R^2 values and non-significant F-statistics. This suggests that students who assist bullies or remain neutral in bullying situations do not display distinct emotional intelligence patterns. Thus, these findings highlight the differential impact of bullying roles on emotional intelligence, reinforcing the notion that active engagement, either as a bully, victim, or defender, has a stronger association with emotional intelligence development compared to passive roles such as assistants or outsiders.

Table 5 *Simple Linear Regression Analyses Predicting Self-Esteem*

Predictor	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*t*	*p*	R^2	*F*
Bully	-0.18	0.08	-.17	-2.18	.031	.03	4.75*
Assistant	0.11	0.09	.10	1.21	.229	.01	1.46
Victim	0.21	0.09	.18	2.32	.022	.03	5.38*
Defender	0.21	0.10	.17	2.11	.037	.03	4.45*
Outsider	-0.05	0.10	-.04	-0.46	.649	.00	0.21

Note. Each row represents a separate simple linear regression model with Self-Esteem as the dependent variable.

The simple linear regression analyses presented in Table 4.5 provide partial support for H3, as some bullying factors significantly predict self-esteem, while others do not. Bullying behavior is a significant negative predictor of self-esteem (B = -0.18, SE = 0.08, β = -.17, p = .031), indicating that students who engage in bullying tend to have lower self-esteem. Although statistically significant, this model explains only 3% of the variance in self-esteem (R^2 = .03, F = 4.75, p < .05), suggesting that while bullying has an impact, other psychological and social factors likely contribute to variations in self-esteem. Victimization is a significant positive predictor of self-esteem (B = 0.21, SE = 0.09, β = .18, p = .022), explaining 3% of the variance (R^2 = .03, F = 5.38, p < .05). This finding suggests that students who experience victimization may still maintain a sense of self-worth, possibly due to resilience factors or external support systems. Similarly, defending behavior positively predicts self-esteem (B = 0.21, SE = 0.10, β = .17, p = .037), explaining 3% of the variance (R^2 = .03, F = 4.45, p < .05). This suggests that students who stand up for victims tend to have higher self-esteem, likely because engaging in pro-social behaviors reinforces positive self-perceptions. However, the assistant role (B = 0.11, SE = 0.09, β = .10, p = .229) and the outsider role (B = -0.05, SE = 0.10, β = -.04, p = .649) do not significantly predict self-esteem, as their models yield non-significant R^2 values and low Fstatistics. These results indicate that students who assist bullies or remain neutral in bullying situations do not exhibit distinct self-esteem patterns. So, these findings suggest that direct engagement in bullying, whether as a perpetrator, victim, or defender, has a greater influence on self-esteem than passive roles. The negative impact of bullying on self-esteem highlights the psychological risks associated with aggressive behaviors, while the positive associations between victimization, defending behavior, and self-esteem suggest that social support and resilience factors may mitigate the adverse effects of bullying.

Table 6 *Gender Differences in Key Variables: Independent Samples t-test Results*

Variable	Girls		Boys		*t*	*p*	Cohen's d
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Bully	22.99	9.92	34.31	11.06	-6.78**	<.001	-1.07
Assistant	27.64	11.50	30.85	10.29	-1.86	.064	-0.30
Victim	33.44	9.37	23.15	10.28	6.59**	<.001	1.04
Defender	30.23	9.68	20.51	8.49	6.77**	<.001	1.07
Outsider	17.56	10.24	21.13	9.33	-2.31*	.022	-0.37
Emotional Intelligence	59.97	20.56	54.51	18.60	1.77	.079	0.28
Self-Esteem	38.81	11.75	35.80	13.37	1.51	.134	0.24

Note. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

The independent samples t-test results presented in Table 4.6 provide partial support for H4, as significant gender differences are observed for some bullying factors but not for emotional intelligence or self-esteem. Boys report significantly higher involvement in bullying behavior (M = 34.31, SD = 11.06) compared to girls (M = 22.99, SD = 9.92), t (158) = -6.78, p < .001, with a large effect size (Cohen's d = -1.07). This indicates that boys are more likely to engage in bullying, aligning with existing research suggesting that males often exhibit higher levels of aggression. Conversely, girls report significantly higher victimization (M = 33.44, SD = 9.37) than boys (M = 23.15, SD = 10.28), t (158) = 6.59, p < .001, with a large effect size (d = 1.04), suggesting that girls may be more likely to experience bullying, possibly due to relational aggression. Defending behavior also differs significantly by gender, with girls (M = 30.23, SD = 9.68) scoring higher than boys (M = 20.51, SD = 8.49), t (158) = 6.77, p < .001, and a large effect size (d = 1.07), indicating that girls are more likely to intervene in bullying situations. Boys, however, score significantly higher on the outsider role (M = 21.13, SD = 9.33) compared to girls (M = 17.56, SD = 10.24), t(158) = -2.31, p = .022, with a small effect size (d = -0.37), suggesting that boys are more likely to remain neutral in bullying incidents. No significant gender differences are observed for the assistant role (p = .064), emotional intelligence (p = .079), or self-esteem (p = .134). Although girls score slightly higher on emotional intelligence and self-esteem than boys, the differences do not reach statistical significance, suggesting that gender

does not strongly differentiate these psychological constructs in the sample. Hence, these findings indicate that while boys are more likely to engage in bullying and remain neutral, girls are more likely to experience victimization and defend peers. The lack of gender differences in emotional intelligence and self-esteem suggests that these traits may be influenced more by individual or contextual factors rather than gender alone.

Table 7 *Differences in Variables by Socioeconomic Status: ANOVA Results*

Variable	Low SES	Middle SES	High SES	*F*	*p*	η^2
	M (SD)	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*			
Bully	22.28 (11.12)	28.17 (9.18)	39.17 (10.00)	33.13**	<.001	.30
Assistant	27.17 (11.21)	28.35 (10.66)	33.78 (10.04)	4.92**	.008	.06
Victim	33.94 (10.66)	28.71 (8.50)	18.95 (9.54)	29.11**	<.001	.27
Defender	31.26 (10.81)	25.11 (7.51)	16.83 (7.25)	32.02**	<.001	.29
Outsider	18.15 (9.37)	19.77 (10.25)	20.68 (10.04)	0.82	.444	.01
Emotional Intelligence	57.89 (19.73)	59.37 (20.50)	52.34 (17.83)	1.69	.188	.02
Self-Esteem	37.15 (12.79)	38.48 (12.16)	35.29 (13.43)	0.79	.455	.01

Note. ** $p < .01$.

The ANOVA results in Table 4.7 indicate that socioeconomic status (SES) significantly influences bullying behaviors but not emotional intelligence or self-esteem. High SES students ($M = 39.17$, $SD = 10.00$) exhibit higher bullying behavior than middle ($M = 28.17$, $SD = 9.18$) and low SES students ($M = 22.28$, $SD = 11.12$), $F(2,157) = 33.13$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .30$, suggesting that wealthier students may have greater social dominance. Similarly, the assistant role is more common among high SES students ($M = 33.78$, $SD = 10.04$), $F(2,157) = 4.92$, $p = .008$, $\eta^2 = .06$, indicating a small to moderate effect. Conversely, victimization is highest in low SES students ($M = 33.94$, $SD = 10.66$), $F(2,157) = 29.11$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .27$, suggesting they are more vulnerable to bullying. Defending behavior is also more prevalent among low SES students ($M = 31.26$, $SD = 10.81$), $F(2,157) = 32.02$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .29$, indicating that economically disadvantaged students may be more empathetic toward victims. However, outsider behavior, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem do not significantly differ across SES groups ($p > .05$), suggesting that these traits are influenced by other factors beyond financial background.

Table 8 *Independent Samples t-test Results Comparing Private and Public Schools on Key Variables*

Variable	Private School	Public School	***t***(158)	***p***	Cohen's ***d***
	M (SD)	*M (SD)*			
Bully	29.54 (12.16)	28.07 (11.59)	0.75	.452	0.12
Assistant	29.96 (10.82)	28.29 (11.20)	0.93	.353	0.15
Victim	27.43 (11.41)	28.92 (10.57)	-0.82	.414	-0.13
Defender	24.63 (10.20)	25.80 (10.42)	-0.69	.491	-0.11
Outsider	20.10 (9.35)	18.36 (10.76)	1.08	.284	0.18
Emotional Intelligence	57.81 (19.36)	55.80 (20.30)	0.62	.534	0.10
Self-Esteem	37.65 (12.58)	36.46 (12.95)	0.57	.567	0.09

Note. *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation.

The independent samples t-test results in Table 4.8 reveal no significant differences between private and public school students across bullying factors, emotional intelligence, or self-esteem. Bullying behavior is slightly higher in private school students ($M = 29.54$, $SD = 12.16$) compared to public school students ($M = 28.07$, $SD = 11.59$), but the difference is not statistically significant, $t(158) = 0.75$, $p = .452$, $d = 0.12$. Similarly, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider roles show no meaningful variation across school types ($p > .05$), suggesting that school environments may not strongly shape these behaviors. Likewise, emotional intelligence

and self-esteem scores do not differ significantly between private and public school students, with mean scores of M = 57.81 (SD = 19.36) and M = 37.65 (SD = 12.58) in private schools, and M = 55.80 (SD = 20.30) and M = 36.46 (SD = 12.95) in public schools, respectively.

Table 9 *One-Way ANOVA Results for Family Structure on Key Variables*

Variable	Joint		Nuclear		*F*	*p*	
	M(SD)		*M(SD)*				
Bully	24.66 (9.72)	35.04(11.97)	26.26(11.46)	44.75 (2.50)	13.21	.001	.20
Assistant	27.30(10.89)	31.49(10.94)	31.41(10.61)	23.75 (8.81)	2.29	.081	.04
Victim	32.30 (8.79)	22.35(11.09)	29.81(11.06)	13.00 (2.16)	13.83	.001	.21
Defender	28.51 (9.47)	20.16 (9.09)	27.41(10.31)	12.75 (2.06)	11.14	.001	.18
Outsider	19.92(10.53)	19.38 (9.97)	18.52 (8.22)	18.25(10.15)	0.15	.928	.01
Emotional Intelligence	57.92(20.99)	54.31(17.89)	61.41(19.37)	50.00(19.61)	1.02	.387	.02
Self-Esteem	37.86(12.15)	36.38(13.29)	38.67(12.21)	26.75(16.74)	1.17	.322	.02

Note. M = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; η^2 = Eta-squared.

The one-way ANOVA results in Table 4.9 indicate significant differences in bullying behaviors among students from different family structures. Bullying scores were highest among students from single-parent families (M = 44.75, SD = 2.50), followed by those from joint families (M = 35.04, SD = 11.97), nuclear families (M = 26.26, SD = 11.46), and guardian care (M = 24.66, SD = 9.72), F(3, 156) = 13.21, p = .001, η2 = .20, indicating a large effect size. Similarly, victimization and defender roles also showed significant variations, with students from guardian care reporting the highest victimization scores (M = 32.30, SD = 8.79), while those from single-parent households had the lowest (M = 13.00, SD = 2.16), F(3, 156) = 13.83, p = .001, η2 = .21, also representing a large effect. The defender role followed a similar pattern, with students from guardian care (M = 28.51, SD = 9.47) and nuclear families (M = 27.41, SD = 10.31) showing higher scores than those from joint families (M = 20.16, SD = 9.09) and singleparent households (M = 12.75, SD = 2.06), F(3, 156) = 11.14, p = .001, η2 = .18, suggesting a large effect size. In contrast, the outsider role did not significantly differ across family structures, F(3, 156) = 0.15, p = .928, η2 = .01, indicating a negligible effect. Emotional intelligence and self-esteem did not significantly differ based on family structure, F(3, 156) = 1.02, p = .387, η2 = .02, and F(3, 156) = 1.17, p = .322, η2 = .02, respectively, both representing small effect sizes. Although students from nuclear families had slightly higher emotional intelligence (M = 61.41, SD = 19.37) than those from joint (M = 54.31, SD = 17.89) and guardian-care families (M = 57.92, SD = 20.99), these differences were not statistically meaningful. Similarly, self-esteem scores were relatively stable across groups, except for students from single-parent households, who had the lowest scores (M = 26.75, SD = 16.74). These findings suggest that while family structure influences bullying experiences, its impact on emotional intelligence and self-esteem is minimal.

Table 9 *One-Way ANOVA Results for Family Structure on Key Variables*

Variable	Joint		Nuclear		*F*	*p*	
		M(SD)		*M(SD)*			
Bully	24.66 (9.72)	35.04(11.97)	26.26(11.46)	44.75 (2.50)	13.21	.001	.20
Assistant	27.30(10.89)	31.49(10.94)	31.41(10.61)	23.75 (8.81)	2.29	.081	.04
Victim	32.30 (8.79)	22.35(11.09)	29.81(11.06)	13.00 (2.16)	13.83	.001	.21
Defender	28.51 (9.47)	20.16 (9.09)	27.41(10.31)	12.75 (2.06)	11.14	.001	.18
Outsider	19.92(10.53)	19.38 (9.97)	18.52 (8.22)	18.25(10.15)	0.15	.928	.01
Emotional Intelligence	57.92(20.99)	54.31(17.89)	61.41(19.37)	50.00(19.61)	1.02	.387	.02
Self-Esteem	37.86(12.15)	36.38(13.29)	38.67(12.21)	26.75(16.74)	1.17	.322	.02

Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; η^2 = Eta-squared.

The one-way ANOVA results in Table 4.10 reveal significant differences in bullying experiences based on grade level. Bullying scores were highest among 10th-grade students (M = 34.21, SD = 11.89) and lowest among 7th graders (M = 22.44, SD = 11.79), F(4, 155) = 6.65, p = .001, η2 = .15, indicating a moderate to large effect. Similarly, victimization scores varied significantly, with the highest reported by 7th graders (M = 34.28, SD = 10.89) and the lowest by 10th graders (M = 22.25, SD = 10.43), F(4, 155) = 8.64, p = .001, η2 = .18, demonstrating a large effect. The defender role also showed notable grade-level differences, with 7th-grade students scoring the highest (M = 31.44, SD = 11.18) and 10th graders the lowest (M = 20.53, SD = 8.78), F(4, 155) = 7.81, p = .001, η2 = .17, reflecting a large effect. The outsider role did not differ significantly across grade levels, F(4, 155) = 2.17, p = .075, η2 = .05, suggesting a small effect. Emotional intelligence and self-esteem did not show significant differences across grades, F(4, 155) = 0.79, p = .537, η2 = .02, and F(4, 155) = 1.35, p = .253, η2 = .03, respectively, indicating small effect sizes. Although 7th-grade students reported the highest selfesteem (M = 40.64, SD = 10.38) and emotional intelligence (M = 61.03, SD = 18.63), these differences were not statistically meaningful. These findings suggest that while bullying experiences significantly vary with grade level, emotional intelligence and self-esteem remain relatively stable.

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between bullying factors (bully, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider), emotional intelligence, and self-esteem among secondary school students in Bahawalpur's private and government schools. The hypothesis 1 was postulated as Bullying factors (bully, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider), emotional intelligence, and self-esteem are significantly correlated. The findings presented in Table 4.3 demonstrated partial support for the hypothesis (H1) which suggested that these variables are significantly correlated. The results revealed a significant positive correlation between bullying behavior and the assistant role suggesting that students who engage in bullying are likely to have peers who assist them. This aligns with previous research indicating that bullying is often a group process, where assistants reinforce the bully's actions by providing support (Salmivalli et al., 2011). Conversely, bullying behavior was strongly and negatively correlated with victimization and defending behavior. These findings suggest that students who bully others are less likely to be victims themselves or to intervene in bullying situations. This is consistent with the notion that bullying dynamics are shaped by power imbalances, where bullies exert dominance while defenders actively resist such behaviors (Olweus, 2013). Moreover the outsider role did not show significant correlations with bullying, indicating that students who remain neutral in bullying situations may not directly influence or be influenced by bullying behaviors. This aligns with findings from prior research suggesting that outsiders may avoid involvement to maintain social status or out of fear of retaliation (Thornberg et al., 2017). Likewise regarding emotional intelligence, the study found a negative correlation with bullying, indicating that students with higher emotional intelligence are less likely to engage in bullying behaviors. Additionally,

emotional intelligence was positively associated with defending behavior, suggesting that emotionally intelligent students may be more inclined to intervene in bullying situations and support victims. Interestingly, a weak but significant positive correlation was observed between emotional intelligence and victimization, indicating that emotionally aware students may still experience victimization, possibly due to their heightened sensitivity to social interactions (Mayer et al., 2016). Furthermore Self-esteem also demonstrated notable relationships with bullying factors. It was negatively correlated with bullying implying that students with higher self-esteem are less likely to engage in bullying behaviors. In contrast, self-esteem was positively associated with defending and victimization. The positive link between self-esteem and defending suggests that students with greater confidence are more willing to stand up for others, a finding consistent with research emphasizing the role of self-esteem in pro-social behavior (Rigby, 2012). However, the association between self-esteem and victimization suggests that students with higher self-esteem may still experience bullying, potentially because they are more assertive or visible in social interactions (Baumeister et al., 2003). Moreover the strongest correlation observed in this study was between emotional intelligence and self-esteem, indicating a strong relationship between these two constructs. This supports previous research suggesting that emotional intelligence contributes to self-esteem by enhancing self-awareness, emotional regulation, and social competence (Petrides et al., 2007. Overall, these findings highlight the complex interplay between bullying behaviors, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem among secondary school students. The results emphasize the importance of fostering emotional intelligence and self-esteem in anti-bullying interventions, as both appear to play significant roles in reducing bullying behaviors and promoting pro-social actions. Future research should explore these relationships further, incorporating longitudinal designs to examine the long-term impact of emotional intelligence and self-esteem on bullying dynamics. The study also tested the second hypothesis (H2), which proposed that bullying factors (bully, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider) significantly predict the emotional intelligence of secondary students. The findings provided partial support for this hypothesis. The regression analysis indicated that bullying behavior negatively predicted emotional intelligence, suggesting that students who engage in bullying are likely to have lower emotional intelligence. This aligns with previous studies indicating that individuals with lower emotional intelligence may struggle with empathy and emotional regulation, making them more prone to aggressive behaviors (Garner & Hinton, 2010). Conversely, victimization was found to be a significant positive predictor of emotional intelligence implying that students who experience bullying may develop higher emotional intelligence as a coping mechanism. This finding is consistent with research suggesting that individuals who face social adversity may enhance their emotional awareness and adaptability to navigate challenging social environments (Swearer & Hymel, 2015). Similarly, defending behavior positively predicted emotional intelligence, indicating that students who intervene in bullying situations tend to have higher emotional intelligence. This supports the idea that emotionally intelligent individuals are more likely to exhibit pro-social behavior, as they possess the ability to recognize and manage emotions effectively in themselves and others (Goleman, 1995). However, the assistant and outsider roles did not significantly predict emotional intelligence. These findings suggest that students who assist bullies or remain neutral in bullying situations may not exhibit distinct emotional intelligence patterns. This aligns with previous research indicating that passive bystanders or accomplices may lack the emotional engagement required to develop higher emotional intelligence (Thornberg & Wänström, 2018). Overall, these findings highlight the complex interplay between bullying behaviors, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem among secondary school students. The results emphasize the importance of fostering emotional intelligence and self-esteem in anti-bullying interventions, as both appear to play significant roles in reducing bullying behaviors and promoting pro-social actions. Future research should explore these relationships further, incorporating longitudinal designs to examine the long-term impact of emotional intelligence and self-esteem on bullying dynamics. The third hypothesis of the present study was postulated as Bullying factors (bully, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider) significantly predict the self-esteem of secondary students. The findings of this hypothesis are presented in Table 4.5 in which simple linear regression analyses was done

to assess the hypothesis. Findings suggested partial support for H3, as it revealed that some bullying factors significantly predict self-esteem, while others do not. Bullying behavior is a significant negative predictor of self-esteem indicating that students who engage in bullying tend to have lower self-esteem. Although statistically significant, this model explains only 3% of the variance in self-esteem, suggesting that while bullying has an impact; other psychological and social factors likely contribute to variations in self-esteem. Victimization is a significant positive predictor of self-esteem, explaining 3% of the variance. This finding suggests that students who experience victimization may still maintain a sense of self-worth, possibly due to resilience factors or external support systems. Similarly, defending behavior positively predicts self-esteem explaining 3% of the variance This suggests that students who stand up for victims tend to have higher self-esteem, likely because engaging in pro-social behaviors reinforces positive self-perceptions. However, the assistant role and the outsider role do not significantly predict self-esteem, as their models yield non-significant R^2 values and low F-statistics. These results indicate that students who assist bullies or remain neutral in bullying situations do not exhibit distinct self-esteem patterns. So, these findings suggest that direct engagement in bullying, whether as a perpetrator, victim, or defender, has a greater influence on self-esteem than passive roles. The negative impact of bullying on self-esteem highlights the psychological risks associated with aggressive behaviors, while the positive associations between victimization, defending behavior, and self-esteem suggest that social support and resilience factors may mitigate the adverse effects of bullying. In this study various demographic variables were also assessed like hypothesis 4 was proposed that Bullying factors (bully, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider), emotional intelligence, and self-esteem of secondary students are significantly different among girls and boys. The Table 4.6 present the findings of Independent sample t test which demonstrated the gender differences in bullying roles, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem. The results revealed significant gender differences in bullying behaviors: boys scored higher in bullying and the outsider role, whereas girls scored higher in victimization and defending behavior. However, no significant gender differences were found in emotional intelligence or self-esteem, indicating that these psychological traits may be influenced by other factors beyond gender. Similarly the Hypothesis 5 was formulated to assess the socio demographic differences as it was postulated that Bullying factors (bully, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider), emotional intelligence, and self-esteem are significantly different among students of different social status. The ANOVA test's findings are presented in Table 4.7 demonstrated significant differences in bullying factors based on socioeconomic status. Students from high SES backgrounds scored significantly higher in bullying behavior as compared to middle SES and low SES students. Similarly, students from high SES backgrounds had the highest assistant scores followed by middle SES and low SES students In contrast, victimization was significantly higher among low SES students compared to middle and high SES students. Moreover Defending behavior followed a similar pattern, with low SES students scoring the highest. These findings indicate that bullying dynamics vary significantly across socioeconomic strata, with lower SES students experiencing more victimization and engaging in defending roles. Similarly hypothesis 6 was postulated as "Bullying factors (bully, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider), emotional intelligence, and self-esteem are significantly different among private and government students". For this purpose T test analysis was used and the findings of the independent samples t-test presented in Table 4.8 indicate no significant differences between private and public school pupils on bullying variables, emotional intelligence, or self-esteem. Bullying behavior is somewhat elevated among private school students relative to public school students however, the difference lacks statistical significance, and likewise, the roles of assistance, victim, defender, and outsider exhibit no significant difference across different school types indicating that school surroundings may not significantly influence these behaviors. Similarly, emotional intelligence and self-esteem scores exhibit no significant differences between private and public school students, with mean scores of for private schools, and for public schools, respectively. Likewise another important demographic variable "Family Structure" was assessed in Hypothesis 7. It was hypothesized that Bullying factors (bully, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider), emotional intelligence, and self-esteem would be significantly different among different family structures. The one-way ANOVA results

presented in Table 4.9 revealed considerable disparities in bullying behaviors among children from varying family arrangements. These findings indicated that bullying scores were highest among students from single-parent families followed by those from joint families, nuclear families and guardian care. The analysis yielded signifying a substantial effect size. Victimization and defender roles exhibited notable differences, with students in guardian care reporting the highest victimization scores whereas those from single-parent households reported the lowest score which indicating a substantial effect. Similarly the defender role exhibited a comparable trend, with students from guardian care and nuclear families' attaining higher scores than those from joint families and single-parent households indicating a substantial effect size. The outsider role exhibited no significant variation across family structures suggesting a minimal effect. Emotional intelligence and selfesteem exhibited no significant differences according to family structure, respectively, both indicating minor effect sizes. Similarly it was found that students from nuclear families had marginally elevated emotional intelligence compared to those from joint (and guardian-care families nevertheless, these disparities lacked statistical significance. Likewise, self-esteem levels remained comparatively consistent among groups, with the exception of students from single-parent households, who exhibited the lowest values (These data indicate that although family structure affects bullying experiences, its influence on emotional intelligence and selfesteem is negligible. Similarly the last hypothesis hypotheses 8 examined the differences in bullying factors (bully, assistant, victim, defender, and outsider), emotional intelligence, and self-esteem across different grade levels. The findings presented in Table 4.10 revealed that significant differences exist among students of various grades for the bully, victim, and defender roles, whereas differences in the assistant and outsider roles were non-significant. Additionally, emotional intelligence and self-esteem did not significantly vary across grade levels. The results indicated a significant effect of grade level on the bullying, suggesting that students in higher grades, particularly 10th graders reported higher levels of bullying behavior compared to younger students. This finding aligns with previous studies that suggest an increase in aggressive behaviors as students transition into higher grades, possibly due to social dominance and hierarchical positioning within peer groups (Olweus, 2013). Similarly, significant grade-level differences were observed for victimization with 7thgrade students (reporting the highest victimization levels, which then declined in later grades. This pattern is consistent with research indicating that younger students are more vulnerable to bullying, but as they advance in grade levels, they develop coping mechanisms or adapt to peer dynamics (Smith et al., 2019). Regarding the defender role, a significant difference was found (with 7th-grade students being more likely to act as defenders compared to 10th graders. This may suggest that younger students exhibit more pro-social behaviors and are more inclined to intervene in bullying situations, whereas older students might become more disengaged or adopt an indifferent stance as they approach the final years of schooling (Salmivalli et al., 2011). The assistant and outsider roles did not show significant differences across grade levels, implying that students' involvement as bystanders or reinforcers of bullying behavior remains relatively stable throughout their academic years. This could be attributed to the fact that passive participation in bullying, either as an assistant or outsider, is less influenced by age and more by individual personality traits and social norms within peer groups (Rigby & Slee, 2017). Emotional intelligence self-esteem) did not significantly differ across grade levels, indicating that these psychological factors remain consistent throughout middle and high school. While previous studies have suggested that emotional intelligence and self-esteem fluctuate with developmental stages (Mavroveli et al., 2007), the present findings suggest that within this age range, these traits may be relatively stable, possibly influenced more by individual differences than by grade level. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of grade-specific interventions, particularly in reducing bullying behaviors in higher grades and reinforcing prosocial roles such as defenders. Additionally, as victimization peaks in early middle school, targeted support programs may be necessary to enhance coping skills among younger students. Future research could explore longitudinal changes in these behaviors and psychological attributes to better understand their development over time.

Limitations

1. The study was conducted within a limited geographical area (Bahawalpur), which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other regions of Pakistan.
2. The use of self-report measures may have introduced social desirability bias, as students might have underreported or over reported their experiences related to bullying, emotional intelligence, or self-esteem.
3. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal inferences about the relationship between bullying, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem.
4. Only students who were present during data collection and willing to participate were included, potentially excluding those who may have been more severely affected by bullying.
5. The study did not account for socioeconomic or cultural factors that might influence bullying experiences or emotional development**.**

Future Recommendation

Future research should consider expanding the sample size and including participants from various regions of Pakistan to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal studies are recommended to examine the long-term effects of bullying on emotional intelligence and self-esteem. Additionally, incorporating qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups could provide richer, more in-depth insights into the personal experiences of students affected by bullying. It is also important for future studies to explore the role of contextual factors such as family dynamics, school environment, and peer relationships in shaping students' emotional and psychological responses to bullying. Intervention-based research is needed to assess the effectiveness of emotional intelligence training programs or school-based anti-bullying initiatives. Finally, including perspectives from teachers and parents could offer a more holistic understanding of bullying behavior and its broader impact on adolescent development.

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