

Current methodological issues in bullying research

Research on bully/victim problems in schoolchildren is well established and there is at least some consensus on definition and measurement issues in regards to traditional bullying forms. However, some issues have emerged during the last decade that raise important methodological questions. In this workshop, we will focus on two topics related to assessment (bullying in younger children, cyber-bullying) and on two topics related to study design and analysis (evaluation of prevention programs and statistical issues).

First, research on victimization in kindergarten children, or even younger children, is still extremely rare, especially as compared to the growing literature on school children. One of the problems met by researchers doing research on young children is the measurement issue. How can we measure bully/victim problems in young children? Who is the best to tell about it? Françoise Alsaker and Sonja Perren have long experience doing research with kindergarten children and will address the issue in detail.

Second, the use of electronic media to bully others has increased with the growing presence of electronically based communication and the use of the internet for social purposes. However, the continuously changing technology is a new challenge for research. Sonja Perren and Françoise Alsaker currently work on a project on cyber-bullying and will inform about methodological problems and solutions.

Third, many prevention programs have been developed that are aimed at reducing bullying in schools. Evaluation should be an integral part of the development of such programs. However, the evaluation of prevention programs is in itself a challenge and one should be very careful as to the design of the study. Christina Salmivalli has led the development and evaluation of the KiVa anti-bullying program in Finland and will address central issues related to the evaluation of bullying prevention programs.

Fourth, data analyses in bullying research can present a challenge for researchers. Statistical modeling techniques for the measurement of school-level effects and testing of intervention impact will be introduced. Scores obtained as composites from (cyber)bullying and (cyber)victimization scales are often highly skewed. Methods for dealing with these data will be discussed. Thérèse Shaw is a biostatistician with many years experience in the analysis of cluster randomized trials evaluating health promotion interventions in schools.

Timetable

9.00 – 9.15	Opening of the workshop
9.15 – 10.30	Methodological issues in bullying research in kindergarten
10.30 – 11:00	Coffee break
11:00 – 12.15	Methodological issues in cyberbullying
12:15 – 13:00	Discussion groups on kindergarten research and cyberbullying
13:00 – 14:00	Lunchtime and informal discussions
14:00 – 15.15	Evaluation of bullying prevention programs
15.15 – 15:45	Statistical issues in bullying research
15.45 – 16.30	Discussion groups on issues related to evaluation and statistics
16.30 – 16.45	Concluding remarks

Organizers

- Professor Françoise D. Alsaker, University of Bern, Switzerland
- Professor Sonja Perren, University of Zürich, Switzerland

Invited Speakers:

- Professor Christina Salmivalli, Department of Psychology, University of Turku (Finland)
- Ms. Thérèse Shaw, Biostatistician, Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University, Perth (Australia)

Participants (maximum 30):

- Young scholars doing research on bullying or wanting to start research on bullying

Cost

- For most participants, the main cost to participate in the workshop will be for one extra night (as participants will have to arrive the day before the conference begins).
- Costs for coffee break and lunch