

## Chapter 5

# Bullying Towards Body Image During Adolescence

Kadriye Özyazıcı

Sivas Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi, Turkey

### ABSTRACT

*In this chapter, children who are bullied about body image during adolescence are discussed. Adolescent bullying, body image and body dissatisfaction, appearance-related bullying among peers, body image bullying as a mediator of sociocultural effects, body image bullying as a mediator of media effects, results of peer bullying related to body image in adolescents, and solutions and suggestions are presented. Having difficulty in adapting to the physical changes that come with development, the adolescent also faces bullying caused by environmental stress factors and needs to regulate their relations with their peers. During this difficult period of development, it becomes more important to understand the stressors that result from closely changing the adolescent in the way of supporting them socially. Bullying and negative perception of body image is becoming more common. It poses a major threat to the well-being and health of adolescents worldwide. Therefore, this chapter aims to explain body image bullying towards adolescents.*

### INTRODUCTION

In this section, the children being bullied about their body image during adolescence are discussed. Adolescents' bullying, body image, and body dissatisfaction, appearance-related bullying among peers, body image bullying as a mediator of sociocultural effects, body image bullying as a mediator of media effects, observed results of peer bullying about body image on the adolescents, solutions, and suggestions are presented. Adolescence is known as a period, in which significant changes occur at each developmental stage and when the adaptation could be very compelling. Changes in the body can sometimes cause dissatisfaction and negative perceptions about its appearance. Children who are underweight and overweight in relation to their body parts may be at risk of being bullied about their appearance. Seemingly non-bullying conversations with peers about appearance put pressure on body image and can contribute significantly to body dissatisfaction. Sometimes, it can be seen that the expression used

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by the family member unconsciously or criticizing the body shape and weight at home, suggesting a diet affect the adolescent's perception of body image. The physical attractiveness and beauty criteria of the living culture for men and women may cause the internalization of attractiveness ideals and results such as body dissatisfaction and irregular nutrition. In addition to all these factors, in the historical time we live in, the mass media constantly creates a perception about what is attractive to adolescents, how important it is for them to look, and how to achieve this appearance. For this reason, the individuals might face various difficulties or problems especially during the adolescence period. An adolescent, who struggles with adaptation to physical changes coming with development, also faces the bullying arising from environmental stressors and need to arrange his/her relationships with peers. In this difficult period of development, understanding the stressors originating from close modifying them in the way socially supporting the adolescent becomes more important. In order to protect children from bullying towards body image, it is necessary to make a planning that includes all inter-system relations such as family, friends, teachers, mass media, cultural approach, which indirectly affect the development of the individual, starting from the closest social environment. Adolescents exposed to body image bullying do not create a perception that they are not attractive by their peers and are labeled as unpopular youth. The victimized adolescent internalizes this perception attributed to them due to the bullying and finds themselves less attractive. They behave more passively in many areas of their lives such as social relations, sports and academics, and they think that they are less competent. They perceive their mocking thoughts about their appearance by their peers as worse than the current situation. Victims of bullying experience a great deal of deprivation, especially unhealthy eating behavior, in the face of difficulties and anxiety-inducing situations in their lives. For these reasons, adolescents want to change the view of their body more and more every day. Bullying and negative perception towards body image are becoming more and more common. It poses a major threat to adolescent well-being and health worldwide. For this reason, this section aims to explain the body image bullying toward adolescents. This section begins with the definition of the concepts of Adolescence, Body Image, and Body Dissatisfaction. After the definitions, the possible sources of bullying addressing the body image of adolescent will be discussed.

## **BULLYING**

Bullying refers to behaviors causing pain, distress, and sorrow by one or more students towards others without an obvious motivation. It is accepted as a series of intentional, offensive, and repetitive behaviors creating negative effects on the victims (Gilbert & Irons, 2009). Bullies want to harm others by using force or through offensive behaviors (Arseneault, Bowes & Shakoor, 2010). In general, they make their victims feel bad, feared, and defenseless (Pegis, 2013).

Bullying is categorized into four classes as physical, verbal, relational, and cyber-bullying (Migliaccio & Raskauskas, 2016). It can be performed through various ways such as direct or indirect physical contact, verbal abuse, social exclusion, and misuse of social or cyber networks (Arseneault, Bowes & Shakoor, 2010). Physical bullying includes the physical attack to peers or their belongings by children, especially during the early childhood period (Pegis, 2013). Relational bullying is categorized as causing problems in peer relations, exclusion, or manipulation of relationships. It includes psychological attacks such as humiliation, spreading rumors, and damaging self-respect or social status and it can generally be related with other types of bullying. Especially verbal aggression and relational aggression are among the types of bullying observed together. Cyberbullying can be considered relational and verbal bully-

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