

Bullying and self-harm among adolescents in Denmark

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INTRODUCTION

This study is part of the ongoing project *The CASE Study* (Childhood and Adolescent Self-harm in Europe). Since 2001, the study has examined the prevalence of vulnerability, self-harm and suicidal behaviour among adolescents aged 13-19 years in Denmark. Furthermore, factors that decrease or increase the risk of self-harm and suicidal behaviour are identified.

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GOALS

The goal is to raise awareness of how different types of bullying can affect adolescents. With this information, preventive actions can be taken.

METHOD

Data is collected through a questionnaire administered to schools in Denmark. The questionnaire is web-based and included 44 questions in 2016. Eleven questions concerned bullying. Calculations were done by multiple regression analysis to control for gender, age and household variations.

RESULTS

In total, 7,949 adolescents aged 13-19 years from 67 different schools completed the questionnaire.

	At school	86 %
	On the Internet	26 %
	On the phone	15 %
	At leisure activities	14 %
	At home	4 %
	Other places	6 %

Table 1: Places where adolescents experience bullying (n=2,561)

One third of the adolescents had experienced bullying one or more places (see Table 1 for more details).

Adolescents bullied at school had a two times higher risk of committing self-harm compared to the group that was not bullied (reference group). Cyber bullying increased the risk of committing self-harm nearly three times while bullying at home increased the risk of self-harm fourteen times compared to those who were not bullied (See Table 2 for more details).

Place bullied	Self-harm (OR)	Confidence interval
Not bullied	1	-
At school	2.3***	[1.9 – 2.7]
On the Internet	2.7***	[1.7 – 4.2]
On the phone	2.3*	[1.2 – 4.5]
At leisure activities	1.1	[0.3 – 3.8]
At home	14.4***	[5.3 – 39.2]
Other places	3.6***	[2.2 – 6.0]

Table 2. Risk of self-harm compared to place bullied
*p<0.05 **p<0.005 ***p<0.0001

If the adolescents had been bullied more than one place (any combination) they would have a six times higher risk of committing self-harm compared to the reference group (OR 5.8, p<0.0001).

CONCLUSION

Bullying is a well-known risk factor for self-harm, but the place of being bullied also affect adolescents in different ways. Research shows that especially bullying at home and cyber bullying have a negative impact on adolescents regarding self-harm, and therefore it is important to pay special attention to these types of bullying.

