Method

12,402 participants (902 parents/guardians of students with disabilities and 11,500 parents/guardians of students without disabilities) from 74 elementary schools in Delaware.

- Parent survey asked child’s gender, grade, and parent’s race/ethnicity. Parents were also asked to indicate if their child has a disability (and what type).
- Table 2 shows the number of participants per disability category.

Bully victimization was assessed with a modified version of the Adolescent Peer Relations Instrument: Bully/Target Scale (B/TS; Marsh et al., 2011). See Table 1.

Bully victimization status was determined two ways:

- First way: Responses of “never” on item 13 classified the student as a non-victim. Responses of “sometimes” or higher classified the student as a victim.
- Second way: Responses of “never” or “sometimes” on item 13 classified the student as a non-victim. Responses of “once or twice a month” or higher classified the student as a victim.

Results: Prevalence Rates

- 50.0% of students with emotional disturbance
- 20.0% of students with a hearing impairment
- 10.2% of students without disabilities

“Students left my child out of things to make him/her feel badly.” (Relational)

- 17.6% of students with a mild intellectual disability
- 16.7% of students with emotional disturbance
- 14.5% of students with autism spectrum disorder
- 4.6% of students without disabilities

“My child was bullied in this school.” (General)

- 41.7% of students with emotional disturbance
- 16.7% of students with a mild intellectual disability
- 5.2% of students without disabilities

Results: Odds Ratios

Odds ratios were calculated for each disability compared to students without disabilities. Table 2 shows odds ratios for the two ways of classifying victims.

1. First classification method (victim status with response of “sometimes” or higher on item 13):
   - All disability types show a significantly increased likelihood of being bullied.
   - Students with emotional disturbance demonstrate much higher risk for bullying victimization. A student with emotional disturbance is around 8 times more likely to be bullied than a student without a disability.

2. Second classification method (victim status with response of “once or twice a month” or higher on item 13):
   - Only students with emotional disturbance show increased risk of being victims of bullying. A student with emotional disturbance is approximately 10 times more likely to be bullied compared to a student without a disability.

Discussion

- The methods used to determine bullying victimization status are important and create variation in victimization rates.
- Students with disabilities seem to be at greater risk of being bullied than students without disabilities. In particular, students with emotional disturbance appear to be at greatest risk.
- Examining item prevalence rates by disability category and type of bullying provides focus for intervention planning.
- School-wide interventions for all students need to focus on fostering positive school climate, emphasizing peer relations, and acceptance of differences.
- Increase awareness of the negative impact of verbal and relational bullying on others, not just physical bullying.
- Students with disabilities (especially those with emotional disturbance) should be targeted for bullying interventions such as additional opportunities for social skill development.