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STICKS, STONES, TEXTS, AND TWEETS:

Comparing Traditional Bullying And Cyberbullying

feature by **Research Officer Jerrine Khong**

TRADITIONAL BULLYING

CYBERBULLYING

We surveyed 3319 youths in 2014...

About **1 in 4** were traditional victims

About **1 in 9** were cybervictims

To access the e-version of the newsletter, please go to www.childrensociety.org.sg/research-bites.

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TRADITIONAL BULLYING

'Face-to-face', mostly happens in schools and on school days

Bully can be identified

Limited number of observers

Bully and observers can see the reaction of victim firsthand

CYBERBULLYING

Online, anywhere, 24/7, 365 days/year

Bully can be anonymous
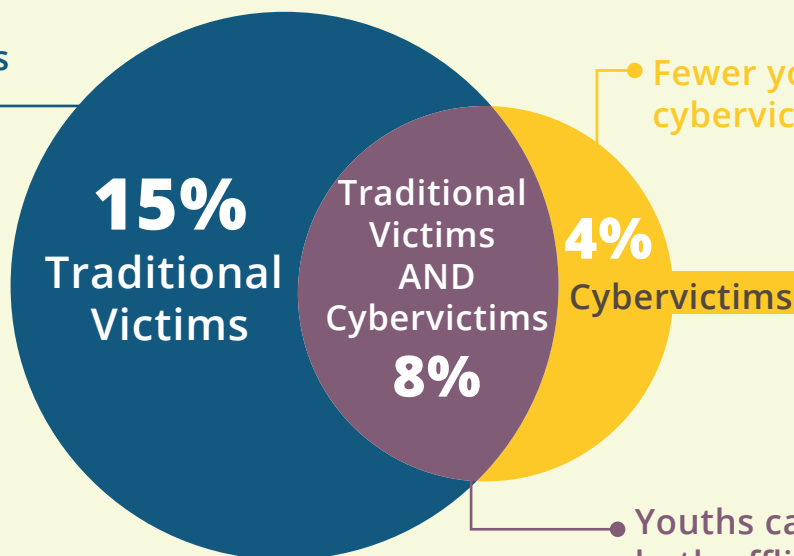
Limitless audiences – can go viral

Reaction of victim cannot be seen – harder to empathize with victim

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We found that 8% of youths reported experiencing BOTH forms of bullying

Traditional bullying is more common

73% Not bullied

3319 participants

15% Traditional Victims

Traditional Victims AND Cybervictims **8%**

4% Cybervictims

Fewer youths were cybervictims only

Youths can be victims both offline and online

Electronic media is simply an additional platform where bullying can take place

Interventions should target both traditional bullying and cyberbullying together, instead of focusing on either traditional or cyberbullying.

Parents and educators should be aware that **when children are victims of traditional bullying, their risks of also being cybervictims are higher.**

Visit **www.bullyfree.sg** for more information

SAME SAME BUT DIFFERENT: ARE PARENTS GETTING IT RIGHT ABOUT THEIR CHILD'S WELL-BEING?

feature by **Research Intern Amirah Sahrom**

906 parent-child pairs were given a questionnaire and asked to evaluate two aspects of their child's well-being:

SOCIAL WELL-BEING

The ability to connect and maintain relationships with:

PARENTS

Parents believed that their children would share secrets with them more often than what was reported by children.

Mothers, compared to fathers, were more connected with their children. They:

- expressed their love more frequently
- spent more time with them
- helped children with their homework more frequently

SIBLINGS

Parents felt that their children got along better with their siblings than with their friends.

Children who felt that their mother was playing favourites:

- had less positive sibling relationships
- were worried and felt sad more often
- had lower self-esteem

There were no differences in general well-being between children with and without siblings.

FRIENDS

Although most children reported good friendships,

6%

did not find it easy to make friends in school. They:

- tended to worry more
- had less positive friendships

EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

The ability to keep a good balance of positive and negative feelings. For example, how much children worried, felt sad, or quarrelled with others.

Nearly 1 in 10 children experienced sadness more frequently than "sometimes" and experienced worry "often".

More information about the study can be found at www.childrensociety.org.sg/research-completed.

IN SUMMARY

- Generally, children in Singapore schools reported good social-emotional well-being!
- Parents displayed a good sense of their child's well-being.
- When children perceived their mothers to be playing favourites, they also tended to have poorer social well-being.
- Fathers spent less time with their child compared to mothers.
- Parents expressed concern more often about schoolwork and less often about their child's emotional well-being.

TAKEAWAYS

- Parents, especially mothers, should avoid playing favourites!
- Fathers could spend more quality time with their child.
- Parents should connect with their children by going beyond topics like schoolwork and asking children about their feelings as well.

Spotlight!

Research Grant Recipient

Ms Chee Li Ping was a recipient of the Singapore Children's Society Research Grant in 2012. She was a Social Work student at the National University of Singapore and completed this study as part of her Honours Thesis.

feature by **Research Intern Bjorn Ng**

HOW DOES PARENTIFICATION IN LOW INCOME FAMILIES WORK?

Parentification happens when children take up excessive caregiving roles in their families. This may negatively affect the children's developmental needs, which include making friends and attending school.

METHOD

Interviews with **5 mother-child pairs from low-income families**:

- Children were between 7 to 12 years old
- Children showed parentification

More information about the study can be found at www.childrensociety.org.sg/research-completed.

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Findings: Types of Parentified Behaviour Shown

Instrumental Caregiving

- Carries out self-care (e.g. makes own meals)
- Does household chores
- Cares for siblings

> " *I ask him to pat pat the baby [sister], then give baby milk, because he know how to take care of the baby... then [he] will also bathe for [younger brother]."*
>
> – Mother of 7-year-old boy

Emotional Caregiving

- Is mother's confidant and comforter
- Plays a role in resolving parental conflict

> " *He saw... how I went out to work at night and came home about midnight... Sometimes at night, he would sleep with me, hold my hand, all those...He would tell me, 'It's okay, there is [me].'"*
>
> – Mother of 12-year-old boy

Findings: Factors behind Parentification

Mother's Over- Expectation

Children were expected to take up the caregiving role as they were seen as mature and responsible.

> " *...the man at home is only you alone. I depend on you. So I share everything with you."*
>
> – Mother of 12-year-old boy

Children's Resistance

Older children were reluctant to take up caregiving roles. Reasons given were difficulty in taking care of younger siblings, and having no freedom to do what they want.

> " *Difficult (when have to take care of young siblings) because... I feel so sad... because I cannot play bicycle."*
>
> – 7-year-old boy

Mother's Persuasive Tactics

Mothers used persuasive tactics on children to make them comply with orders.

> " *Oh, you don't want to help? Okay, cannot go down, then cannot see TV, cannot follow me out, cannot follow me like go downstairs or go shop."*
>
> – Mother of 7-year-old boy

Children's Initiative

Children took the initiative to help out as they understood the family's needs.

> " *Because I love my mother very much... I like to do this all (vacuum, mop, wash the dishes), because later my mother sick, or painful hand."*
>
> – 10-year-old boy

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The complex parentification process is shaped by both parents and children, showing that children are not as powerless as commonly thought.

Children

Social workers can recognise the child's strengths in caregiving and help them apply these strengths to other areas

Mothers

Social workers can provide support for the mothers by:

- Reducing mothers' childcaring burdens
- Teaching mothers what responsibilities are suitable for children
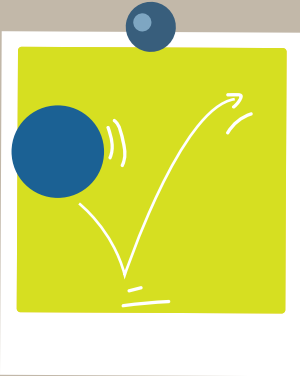
WHAT DO PRACTITIONERS THINK ABOUT RESILIENCE?

feature by **Research Intern Maya Jane Satwant & Research Officer Jasmine Wong**

We conducted 10 focus group discussions with 49 practitioners (social workers, counsellors, and programme staff) from the Singapore Children's Society.

WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

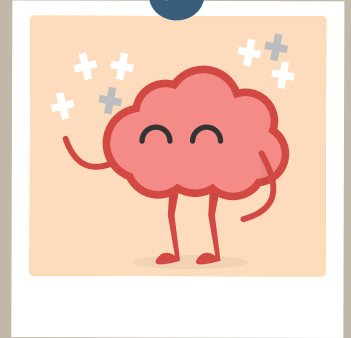*Practitioners described it as...*

BOUNCING BACK FROM STRESSORS

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS

SOCIAL SUPPORT

POSITIVE MINDSET

Practitioners agreed that resilience depends on the situation and the individual's outlook and abilities.

Practitioners disagreed on the level of difficulty and outcomes needed to build resilience.

WHAT PROMOTES RESILIENCE?

Practitioners shared how their service centres promote resilience

Principles in supporting children and youth

- Helping children and youth process their thoughts

- Believing in their ability to cope with difficulties

- Developing their strengths

- Tailoring activities for different clients

> " *One of the models I came across is... identity-based motivation theory. The first task... is to (clarify) the youth's aspirations, and then get him to buy into the idea that... every decision (he) makes is going to change the likelihood of meeting those aspirations.*"

– Social worker from youth drop–in centre

WHAT PROMOTES RESILIENCE?

Practitioners discussed other factors that promote resilience

The Child/Youth

- Personality
- Self-belief and aspirations
- Problem-solving skills
- Find meaning in their struggles

Family

- Age-appropriate parenting
- Stable home environment

Social Support

- Family, friends, and community workers
- Quality of relationships more important than the source of support

"It's a lot about befriending the child/youth, a lot of encouragement, maybe even teaching them certain skills, being someone who will not judge them, willing to listen..."

— Counsellor

School

- Supportive peers, teachers, counsellors, and management
- More support needed for the less academically inclined and school dropouts

"Across all my clients that drop out... they feel like their teachers are all picking on them, so I think teachers play a big part."

— Social worker

What are some research needs?

- What programmes effectively promote resilience?
- Are some programmes effective for some children but not other children?
- How can different social support systems promote resilience?
- How do children, parents and the community understand resilience?
- Are existing measures of resilience appropriate for the local context?

Overall Findings

Practitioners felt that social support systems would have to work together to build resilience

Practitioners expressed a need for research to provide insight into the factors which promote resilience in the local context
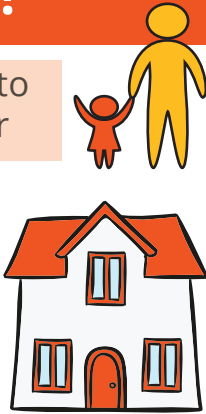
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Singapore Children's Society is conducting a research study on resilience based on findings from the focus group discussions

Who can join?

Children born between 2003 to 2008 and their main caregiver

From households with a monthly Gross Household Income (GHI) of $4,000 or less, or Per Capita Income (PCI) of $1,000 or less

What will happen?

Caregivers and children will complete a survey

Children will complete problem-solving tasks

A $20 NTUC voucher will be given as a token of appreciation

*For more details, contact **64815913 or 82671930** and ask for the Resilience Study or email **jwong@childrensociety.org.sg***

Singapore Children Society's Research Grant

Since 1992, the Singapore Children's Society has awarded over 90 research grants to students conducting research related to children, youth, and families. For more information, visit **www.childrensociety.org.sg/research-grants**.

Research Bites, Singapore Children's Society's bi-annual research newsletter, aims to make research findings more accessible to interested members of the public and professionals working with children. With its easily digestible visual format, Research Bites aims to acquaint readers with our research – both completed and in progress – and research-related information. Research Bites is available at www.childrensociety.org.sg/research-bites.

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