

Olweus Bullying Prevention Evaluation in Nine McDowell County Schools in Southern West Virginia

Mahmood Sulliman, MD¹; Prutha Patel, DO^{1,2} (2026); Lydia Capicotto, DO (2026)^{1,2}; Yaswitha Mikkilineni, DO (2026)^{1,2}; Najeeb Manalai, MD ³; Gul PM Osmani, MD³; Gul Osmani, MD³; Ahmad M Exeer, MD³; Partam Manalai, MD^{1,3}; Patricia Harrison, MD¹; Charles Scercy, MS^{1,4}; Perry Blankenship, D. Min., Ed. S., LSC, LPC, ALPS^{1,4}

Abstract

Background: Today’s schools face an increasing number of students with social and emotional challenges. One major concern in the social/emotional domain is bullying among students, both in traditional face-to-face settings and through online platforms. School systems are often concerned about their ability to effectively address these issues. Fortunately, evidence-based programs like the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, which has been proven to reduce instances of bullying and its negative effects, offer a solution. The aim of this investigation is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program in the McDowell County School District. **Methods:** The pre-survey involved 2,083 students enrolled in grades K-12 (grades 3 through 12 participated in the Olweus Bullying Survey), with the same number of students completing the post-survey. **Results:** Participants came from nine schools and included 2,557 Caucasian students, 238 African American students, 12 Hispanic students, 83 multi-racial students, and 1 student from another ethnicity. There were 1,487 male and 1,404 female participants, with 618 students receiving special education services. The Olweus survey and school climate survey revealed that bullying affected approximately 8% of 3rd graders, 12.5% of 4th graders, 17.6% of 5th graders, 15.6% of 6th graders, 5.8% of 7th graders, 3.2% of 8th graders, 5.2% of 9th graders, and 19.3% of 10th through 12th graders. A 2% decrease in bullying was reported by boys, while bullying incidents among girls increased by 4%, with the majority of incidents occurring on school buses. **Conclusions:** This data provides a short-term snapshot of the impact of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program in the McDowell County School District. To fully assess the program’s effectiveness, the data should be reviewed annually and over a longitudinal period. A longitudinal study tracking students from elementary through high school, as they participate in the Olweus program, will offer valuable insights into the program’s long-term effects. Additionally, McDowell County Schools will implement annual training to support professional development for all staff members, ensuring they are fully committed to the program and equipped to address the unique needs of their classrooms.

Affiliations: 1. MWHC 2. VCOM 3. Intuitive Insight 4.

Methods and Materials

Bullying extends beyond schools, but early prevention can have broad social benefits. The evolving school environment and social media increase victimization risks, particularly through cyberbullying. This study examines bullying prevalence in McDowell County Schools (grades 3–12) and evaluates the Olweus program, which has reduced bullying in Norway and the U.S. since the 1970s. Trained educators administered the Olweus Bullying Survey in 2019 to assess students' experiences and school safety. Lessons were scripted for consistency and delivered weekly across nine schools. Using a Likert scale and open-ended responses, descriptive analysis evaluated bullying characteristics and intervention effectiveness, especially in the largest elementary school. The Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (OBQ) utilized, is an online questionnaire given to all students grades 3 through 12.

Results

